

VOLUME CXII

NUMBER SIX

# THE NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE

DECEMBER, 1957

Special Supplement Map of the Heavens

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Seventy-two Pages of Illustrations in Color

PUBLISHED BY THE  
NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY  
WASHINGTON, D. C.

NONMEMBER SUBSCRIPTION  
\$8.00 A YEAR

SINGLE COPIES  
\$1.00 EACH



# NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC Society

16th & M Streets N.W.

Washington 6, D. C.



National  
Geographic  
Magazine

ORGANIZED IN 1888 "FOR THE INCREASE AND DIFFUSION OF GEOGRAPHIC KNOWLEDGE"

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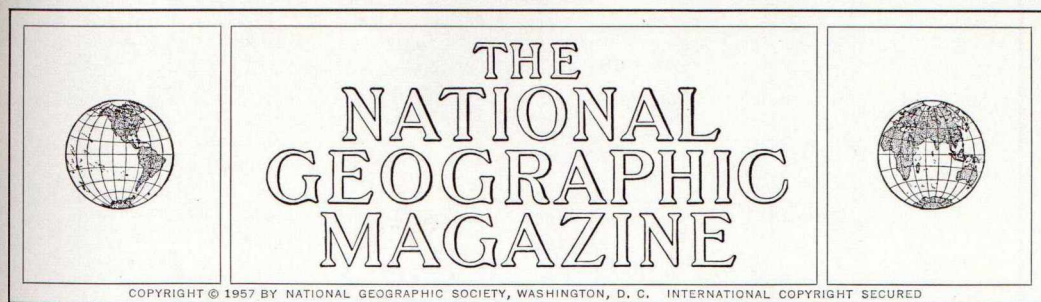
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## I Found the Bones of the *Bounty*

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Lonely Pitcairn Island, Home of the Descendants of History's,  
Most Famous Mutineers, Yields Its Secret to a Diver

BY LUIS MARDEN

Foreign Editorial Staff, National Geographic Magazine

*With Photographs by the Author*

THE COURSE was WNW. The breeze had fallen during the night, and just before dawn the ship had almost completely lost way in the water. Her sails hung loose from the yards. Cordage slatted against the masts, the blocks creaked, and the chuckle of water at the bows died to a whisper. As the vessel rolled gently in the calm sea, the trucks of her masts traced slow arcs against the blazing stars of the Southern Hemisphere.

Distant 10 leagues, under the brilliant blue-white star Vega, the volcanic peak of Tofua rose from a dark sea. The moon, in her first quarter, filled the sails with a white radiance.

Eight bells struck. Fletcher Christian, acting mate of His Majesty's Armed Vessel *Bounty*, came on deck to relieve the watch. The ship's commander, Lt. William Bligh, was asleep in his cabin below.

"I am now unhappily to relate one of the most atrocious acts of Piracy ever committed," Bligh later wrote. "Just before sun-rising, Mr. Christian, with the master at arms, gunner's mate, and Thomas Burket, seaman, came into my cabin while I was asleep, and seizing me, tied my hands with a cord behind my back and threatened me with instant death, if I spoke or made the least noise: I, however, called so loud as to alarm everyone; but they had already secured the officers who were not of their party. . . . Christian had only a cutlass in his hand the others had muskets and

bayonets. I was hauled out of bed and forced on deck in my shirt. . . .

"The boatswain was now ordered to hoist the launch out, with a threat, if he did not do it instantly, to take care of himself. . . . Particular people were now . . . hurried over the side: whence I concluded that with these people I was to be set adrift.

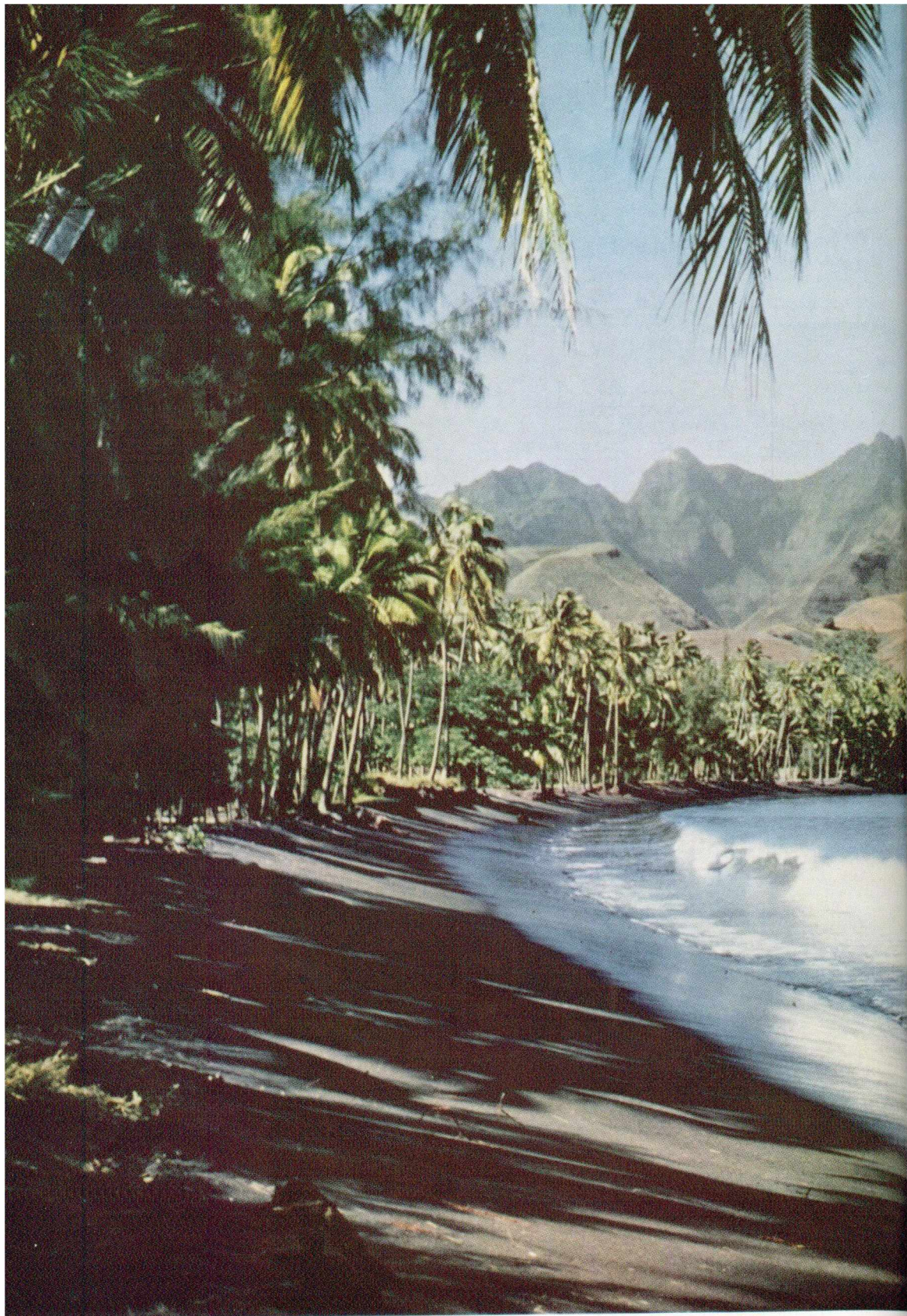
"Christian . . . then said—'Come captain Bligh, your officers and men are now in the boat, and you must go with them; if you attempt to make the least resistance you will instantly be put to death:' and without any further ceremony, holding me by the cord that tied my hands, with a tribe of armed ruffians about me, I was forced over the side. . . . A few pieces of pork were now thrown to us, and some cloaths, also . . . cutlasses. . . . We were at length cast adrift in the open ocean."

### One of the Sea's Greatest Stories

So, on April 28, 1789, began one of the greatest sea stories of all time: the mutiny in the *Bounty* and its fantastic train of events.

*Bounty* had sailed from Spithead in December of 1787, under orders to proceed to Otaheite (Tahiti) in the South Sea, there to take on breadfruit for transport to the West Indies. She stayed nearly six months at "the finest island in the world," taking on plants, and then proceeded to Endeavour Strait by way of Tonga, the Friendly Islands. There,





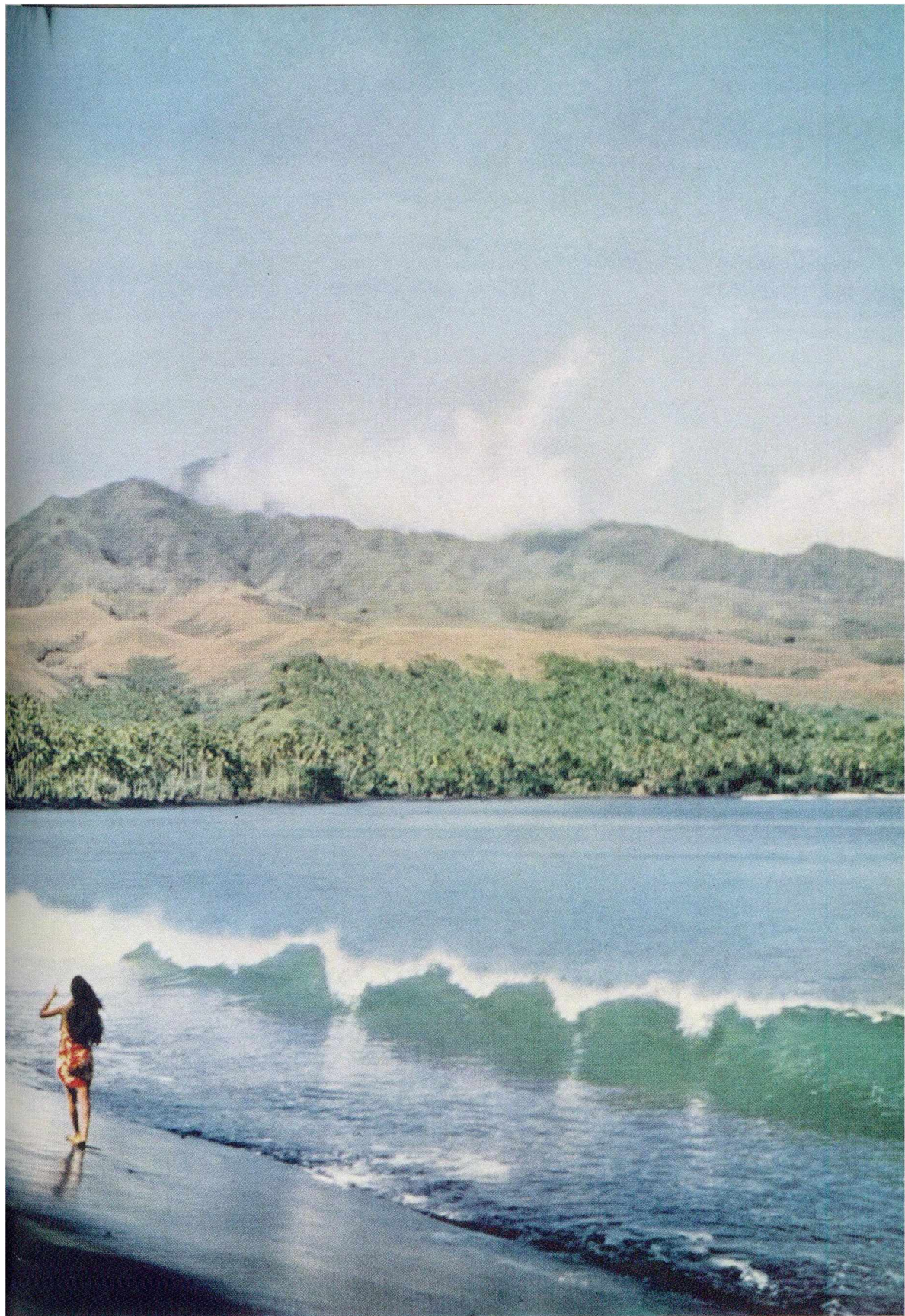
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### **Black Sand, Green Palms, Thundering Surf: Everyman's Dream of the South Pacific**

Since its discovery by Samuel Wallis in 1767, Tahiti has symbolized paradise to writers, painters, and escapists. Benign climate, spectacular scenery, and friendly natives make the island a lotus-eaters' land.





**Tahiti's Matavai Bay Saw Capt. William Bligh and the *Bounty* Sail into History**

This wide, sheltered anchorage served as a base for Pacific explorers for more than a century. Wallis, Bougainville, Cook, and Bligh anchored beyond the surf at right. The *Bounty* came here in 1788.



off Tofua, the famous mutiny took place.

In a boat only 23 feet long, heavily laden with 19 men to within 7 inches of the water, Bligh performed the most celebrated open-boat voyage in the chronicles of the sea (page 730). In 41 days he sailed from Tofua to Timor, 3,618 nautical miles, without the loss of a single man.

As the launch pulled away from the *Bounty*, the castaways heard the mutineers shout "Huzza for Otaheite!" Christian and his mates did return to their island paradise, where 16 of them elected to remain ashore. Eight threw in their lot with Christian; with them went six native men from Tahiti and Tubuai, 12 Tahitian women, and a little girl.

Suddenly in the night they sailed from Tahiti and vanished from history. Not until the ship *Topaz* of Boston touched at Pitcairn Island, a lonely rock 1,300 miles southeast of Tahiti, 18 years later, was the mystery solved.

#### Rudder Preserved in Fiji Museum

Christian had taken his little band to this uninhabited island, stripped the *Bounty*, then run her ashore and burned her. Trouble over a woman touched off a wave of violence and murder. When the *Topaz* arrived in 1808, only one of the original mutineers was still alive.

The story of the *Bounty*, with its incredible amalgam of adventure, violence, and mystery, has long fascinated me. While on assignment in the Fiji Islands some years ago, I was astonished to find in the museum at Suva some lengths of worm-eaten planking held together by copper fastenings, marked "Rudder of H. M. S. *Bounty*." The curator told me the rudder had been fished up from six fathoms of water at Pitcairn in 1933.

Two things surprised me: first, that there had still been visible remains of the old vessel as recently as that; and second, that they lay in such shallow water.

Here was a chance to combine my interest in submarine photography with a story for the National Geographic on the Pitcairn colony. I did not know whether any traces of the burned *Bounty* still remained on the sea bed, or, if they did, whether I could find them, but I wanted very much to try.

Last winter I sailed for Pitcairn from Panama on the New Zealand Shipping Company's *Rangitoto*. Ten days out from Panama we raised the island (map, pages 734-5). It lay low on the horizon, a slate-colored smudge against the bright gold of the westering sun.

We had still more than an hour's steaming to reach the island, as Pitcairn's 1,100-foot height is visible from 45 miles away.

All passengers embarking for Pitcairn at Panama must take passage through to New Zealand, because sometimes wind and sea make it impossible for the boats to come out, and the ships continue on to New Zealand without stopping. No one may land on Pitcairn without permission from the governor of Fiji, who administers the island.

"You're in luck," Capt. C. R. Pilcher said at my elbow. "We've got a calm sea. You'll have no trouble getting ashore."

The captain handed me his binoculars. Through them I could see three small boats rising and falling on the long Pacific swells.

The island rose slowly out of the sea and gradually took on the shape of a crouching lion rimmed with the white of breaking seas (page 732). The boats waited until we stopped; then they shipped their long oars and pulled for our dangling Jacob's ladders. From the bridge I stared curiously down for my first look at the Pitcairn Islanders.

My first impression was one of friendliness. Every upturned face wore a smile, and some people were waving and calling to friends on board. With practiced maneuvers the boats were warped alongside, and almost instantly the Pitcairners began swarming up the ladders, with the women in the lead.

The first men to reach the deck lowered lines to the boat and began to haul up palm-frond baskets full of trade goods—fresh fruits, wood carvings, baskets. The women wore loose cotton dresses and the men were in shirts and dungarees. All were barefoot.

#### Christian's Descendant Comes Aboard

A tall, broad-shouldered man came up the companion ladder. He wore a high-crowned palm-leaf hat and, as he smiled, his white teeth looked dazzling in a handsome tanned face. He held out his hand to the captain. This was Parkin Christian, 73-year-old great-great-grandson of Fletcher Christian and chief magistrate of Pitcairn Island (page 741).

"Welcome to Pitcairn," he said (he pronounced it Peet-kern), when the captain had introduced me. "Hope you enjoy your stay."

I left Parkin talking with the captain and went down to the promenade deck, where the islanders stood surrounded by passengers eagerly buying fruit from the baskets: pineapples, bananas, limes, and mangoes.





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### Beauty and the Breadfruit: Prime Elements of the *Bounty* Story

Bligh sailed to Tahiti for young breadfruit trees to transplant to the West Indies as cheap food for slaves. Friendly girls and easy life ashore, contrasted with harsh conditions at sea, led some of his crew to revolt.



The features of the Pitcairners, both men and women, were more strongly European than I had expected. They were tanned and brown skinned, but most were no darker than sunburned, brown-haired Englishmen. The women looked more Polynesian than the men.

### Hymn Bids Ship Farewell

The *Rangitoto* stayed only an hour; then I said goodbye to my shipboard acquaintances and climbed down the swaying Jacob's ladder. When the last islander had taken his place in the boats, the ladders were pulled aboard the *Rangitoto* and someone called out, "A song for Captain Pilcher and the ship!"

A man began to sing, one by one the others

joined in, and then 70 voices of men and women rose in clear harmony, singing the hymn "In the Sweet Bye and Bye." High above us the rails were white with waving handkerchiefs; as the last strains died away, our boat captain called out, "Cast off!" and we moved slowly away from the ship.

I turned toward shore. The sun had set behind the rocky heights of Pitcairn, and blood-red streaks, like rents in a blast furnace, slashed across the darkening sky.

A voice sang out, "Tillah, tillah! Anybody bin see ah tillah?" The heavy tiller was passed over my head. Then a dozen hands raised the mast, made fast the shrouds, and hoisted our jib and gaff-rigged mainsail.





"H'ist hah shrodes higher!" called the captain, and the men hauled on the shrouds to tauten them.

Left to themselves, the islanders conversed in Pitcairnese. Though difficult for an outsider to understand at first, this was not nearly so unintelligible as I had expected. They used many nautical terms, and the accent was somewhat like that of parts of the West Indies.

As we drove toward the island, with the lee rail well down, my neighbor on the crowded thwart said: "It's darking."

Night does not really fall; it rises, starting at the water's edge and suffusing upward like ink creeping up a blotter.

The man thumped a crate of my air tanks.

"I heardsay you gwen dive in Bounty Bay." I admitted it.

"Man," he said, "you gwen be dead as hatchet!" Why a hatchet should be deader than a doornail, or anything else, I never found out, but it signifies utter extinction.

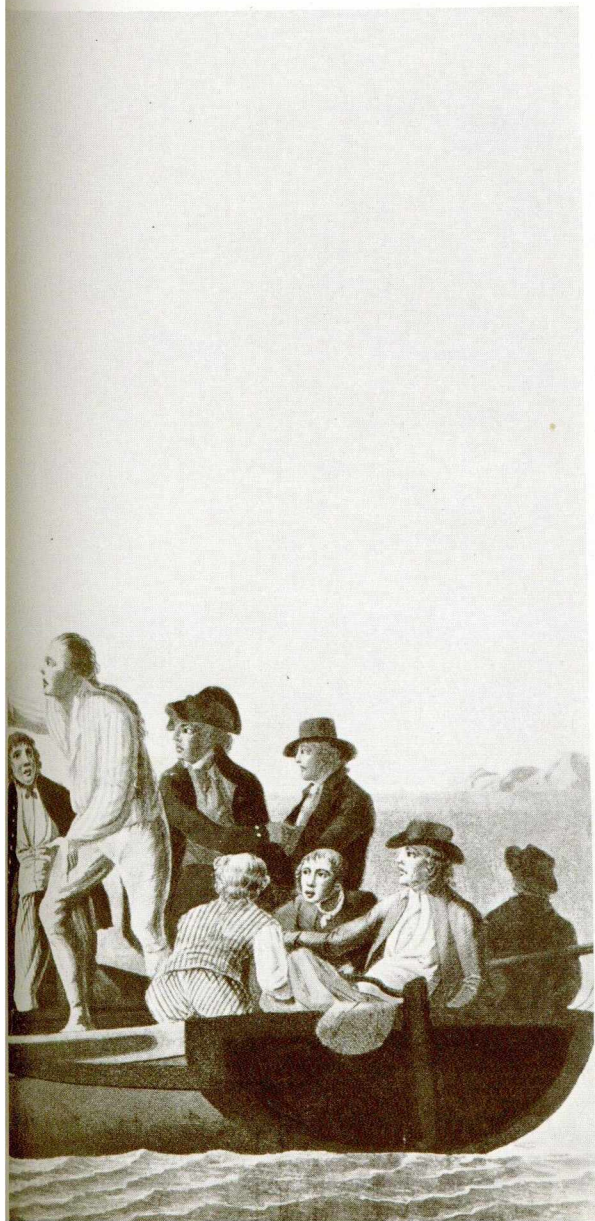
#### Boat Rides Combers into Bounty Bay

As we approached the shore, the darkening island grew taller; the recumbent lion was slowly getting to his feet. In the half light I could see a line of white breakers ahead. Stark against the sky a pinnacle of rock rose 700 feet—Ship Landing Point. At its base lay the rocky cove called Bounty Bay.

At the captain's shouted "Down sail!" the canvas came down with a rush, and the mast was unstepped. We waited just outside the surf while the captain, holding a long steering sweep, scanned the breakers ahead. The 14 rowers lay on their oars, not even turning their heads, until a particularly high wave lifted us and then let us slide down its back.

"Pull ahead!" cried the captain, and the long oars bent as they dipped in unison. We shot forward as a big sea rose under our stern. The men pulled like demons, keeping just ahead of the roller. At express-train speed we rushed past three black rocks on the port hand, entered a narrow channel of calmer water, then slowed and gently bumped against a sloping grid of logs and planks (page 739).

Ready hands seized the bows of the boats as lanterns bobbed at the head of the wooden slide. Several men from our boat jumped into the waist-deep water and started to hand crates and bundles ashore. One presented his broad back to me, said "Ready, mate?" and



#### Beginning of an Epic Voyage: Captain Bligh Is Cast Adrift

On the morning of April 28, 1789, acting mate Fletcher Christian and other *Bounty* crew members seized and bound Bligh and forced him into the ship's launch. Eighteen loyal officers and men went with him. The mutineers grudgingly granted them some bread and water, a little pork, compass and quadrant, and four cutlasses. The 23-foot boat was so overloaded that she had only 7 inches of freeboard.

Bligh, a master navigator, accomplished the incredible feat of sailing 3,618 nautical miles across the Pacific to the friendly Dutch settlement at Timor. For 41 days he fought starvation, thirst, pitiless sun, and the cruel sea itself. His feat remains the world's most celebrated open-boat voyage.

This old print was published in London in 1790. The artist shows breadfruit trees in tubs fastened to the taffrail. Actually they were kept in the great cabin. Gleeful crewmen soon cast them overboard.





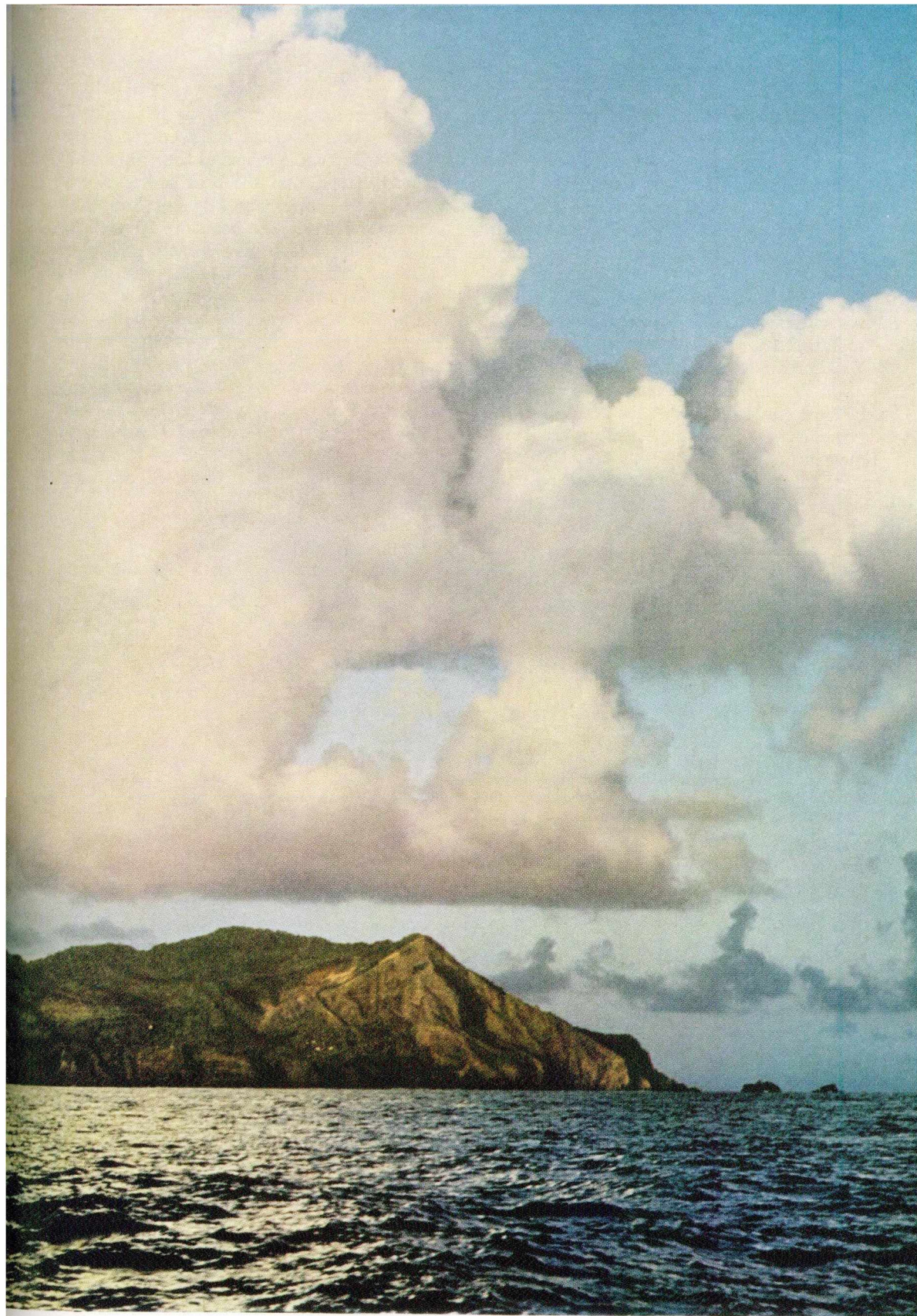
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**Pitcairn Looms in Early Morning Light Like a Crouching Lion Bedded on the Pacific**

So it appeared to Fletcher Christian and his eight shipmates when they sighted the island in 1790. With natives from Tahiti and Tubuai—6 men, 12 women, an infant girl—the mutineers founded a colony that still exists.





733

**On This Isolated Rock the *Bounty* Mutineers Hid from the World for 18 Years**

Crewmen who stayed in Tahiti were captured and tried in England, but Christian and his henchmen were never brought to justice. In 1808 an American ship found only one of the original mutineers alive.



then carried me pickaback in to the landing.

Above us the escarpment rose 250 feet to The Edge, beyond which the houses of the village began. Figures passing before the gas lanterns threw long shadows on the white boats. The unloading went forward rapidly, and a pile of mailbags, sacks, boxes, and crates grew on the shore.

Now I met Allen Wotherspoon, the island schoolteacher, a New Zealander who had come to Pitcairn a year before, and Pastor Lester Hawkes, a Seventh-day Adventist missionary.

On Pitcairn the chief magistrate is the head of local government, but the schoolteacher is government adviser, representing the British governor of Fiji.

"You are lucky," Wotherspoon said. "We had very little sea tonight, and you got your things ashore in a dry state. Sometimes we

take a green one, and everything gets soaked."

When the boats had been unloaded, the men secured a cable to one of them; a donkey engine coughed, and the boat moved slowly up the slide, its heavy keel squealing and groaning. The Pitcairn boats are 37 feet long and well over 7 feet high at the stem.

When the last boat was stored, everybody, including the women, picked up a sack, a box, or a bundle, and we started up the trail. The heavier boxes and mailbags would go up tomorrow by telpheer, or cableway.

Someone asked, "Where's ah man gwen stay long fa me?"

I introduced myself to Fred Christian, at whose home I was to live. Fred is six feet five inches tall, with a broad brown face, curling gray hair, and a gentle smile.

Tom, Fred's 21-year-old son, also shook my hand.

The steep trail is cut into the side of an

### "Breadfruit" Bligh: an Old Portrait

When Lt. William Bligh, R.N., was selected to command the *Bounty*, he had already demonstrated his talents. In 1776, at the age of 23, he was sailing master of one of the two vessels of Captain Cook's third voyage of discovery.

On his return to England after the mutiny, Bligh took command of the *Providence* and successfully accomplished the transplanting of breadfruit from Tahiti to the West Indies.

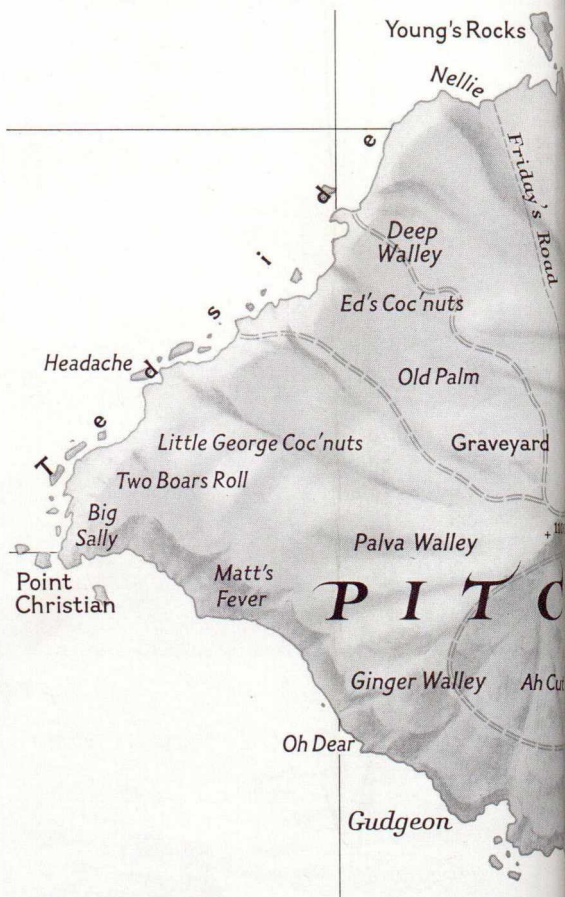
Later Bligh was appointed governor of New South Wales, but was deposed by an armed insurrection. He returned to England, became a Vice Admiral of the Blue, and died in 1817.



Drawn by J. Russell, R.A.

Engraved by H. Adlard.

*Wm Bligh*



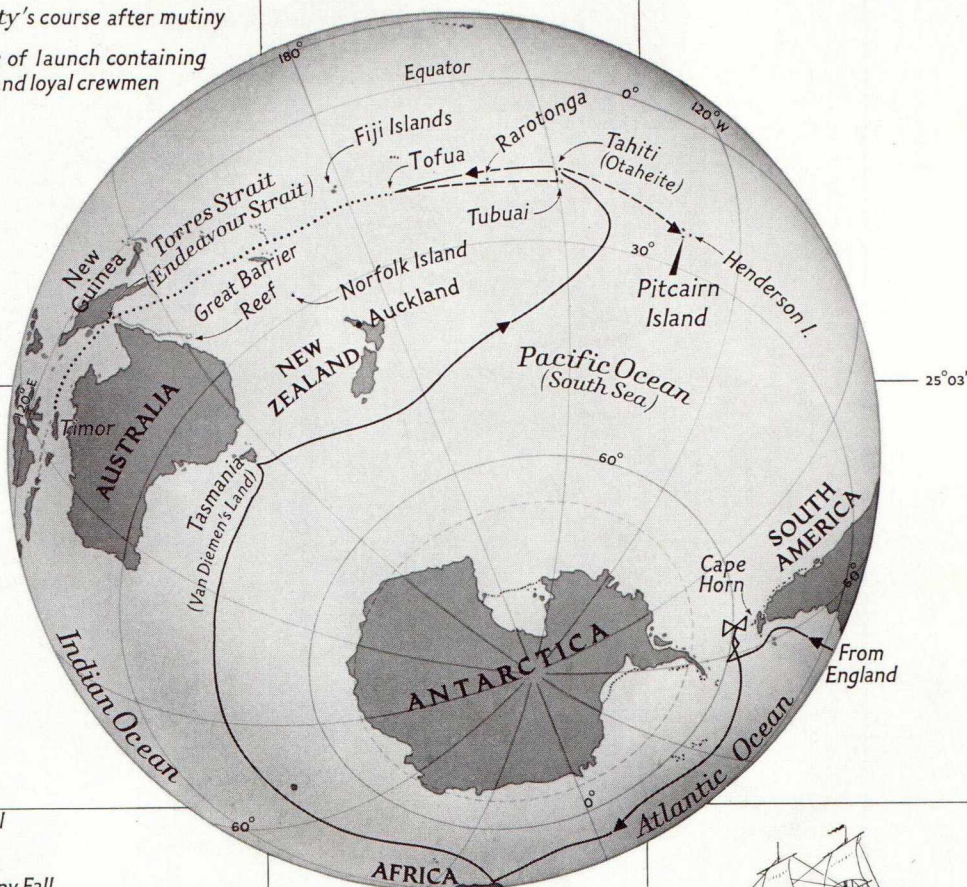
### Pitcairn: Crater of a Dead Volcano

Place names reflect the speech of the islanders, most of whom descend from the *Bounty* mutineers.

The globe shows the track of the *Bounty* to Tahiti and Pitcairn. For a month she tried to beat around Cape Horn against prevailing westerlies. Finally she put about and sailed eastward past Africa.



- *Bounty's* course before mutiny
- - - *Bounty's* course after mutiny
- ..... Course of launch containing Bligh and loyal crewmen



Where  
Dan Fall

White Fish Pool

Johnny Fall

Goathouse

Christian's Cave

Government  
School

Breadfruit Walley  
Brown's Water

Courthouse

Church

Post Office

The Edge

The Landing

**AIRN ISLAND**

Flatland

Up in Ti

Taro Ground

Radio Station

McCoy's Walley

John Catch a Cow

Timiti's Crack

Tautama

Father's Block

High Aute

Aute Walley

Tom's Block

The Rope

Ned Young's  
Ground

Red Dirt

Pool of Uaru

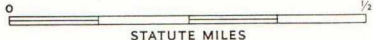
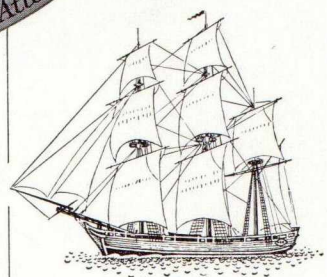
Where Freddie Fall

Bounty burned here  
Ship Landing Point

Adams's Rock

St. Paul's Rock

St. Paul  
Point



2 1/2 Miles ↑





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### Pitcairn Men Stare Intently Out to Sea for Sight of a Passing Ship

First man to spot a vessel on the horizon cries, "Sail ho!" A bell then rings, summoning boat crews to put to sea.



escarpment. Bare feet take the best grip, and my rubber-soled shoes slipped and skidded. I began to pant, and the women, most of whom carried far more than I, looked at me with friendly amusement.

Finally, a series of stony steps helped us over The Edge, and the trail leveled off. Beyond, I saw the lights of houses on both sides.

The pastor was one of the last to turn off, but Wotherspoon, Fred, Tom, and I went on, lighting our way with electric torches. We passed under the aerial roots of a big banyan tree and Fred said, "We home now."

### "No Mister or Mrs. Here"

We said goodnight to the schoolteacher and turned aside to a house of gray, unpainted weatherboards that rested on big foundation stones. A generator plant buzzed in an out-building, and the house shone with light.

Flora Christian took my hand at the door.

"I hope you be happy here," she said.

"Thank you, Mrs. Christian," I replied.

"No Mister or Mrs. here; I'm Flora."

"Yes," Tom said with a grin, "we all use our Christian names here."

Of the island's 153 souls, 55 are surnamed Christian; there are only half a dozen surnames on the whole island. To avoid confusion, no two Pitcairners have the same given name.

"Come have a bit o' supper," Flora said, leading us to a porch furnished with a long oilcloth-covered table. Over my protest I was seated in a chair at the head of the table. Flora, Fred, and Tom sat on benches at the sides. Fred bowed his head and said grace.

I had known before coming to Pitcairn that almost everyone on the island was a member of the Seventh-day Adventist Church. All the Adventists of my acquaintance are vegetarians. So I was surprised when Flora placed before me a big platter of steaming corned beef, along with heaped plates of island vegetables.

Fred is an elder of the church, and I asked him about Adventists eating meat.

"O-a, we always eat meat on Peet-kern; church don't forbid it," he said. "We eat bully beef, salt beef, and fresh goat meat."

Pastor Hawkes told me later that vegetarianism is not an inflexible tenet of his church. Pitcairners, in view of their isolation and lack of variety of diet, have more reason than other Adventists to eat meat, he said.

This license does not extend to pork, however, as Adventists strictly obey the Mosaic injunction against eating the flesh of pigs.

This seems a strange prohibition for a people who are half Polynesian, for throughout the South Pacific pork—*pua'a*—is always the center of any feast. Pigs rooted and ran free on the island from the time the mutineers brought them until John Tay, a missionary from the United States, converted the islanders to Seventh-day Adventism in 1886. Since then not a squeal has been heard on Pitcairn.

Another Biblical prohibition restricts the island diet still further.

"And whatsoever hath not fins and scales ye may not eat; it is unclean unto you."

Adventists interpret this to mean large, visible scales, so that smooth-skinned fish are forbidden, as are shellfish.

In early accounts of life on Pitcairn I had read of parties going down the steep cliff face called The Rope to gather shellfish on the rocks below. So far as I could learn, these are a kind of whelk or winkle. I asked Fred if he had ever sampled them, and he replied with a twinkle, "O-a, I used to *like* them, when I was a heathen."

Islanders do catch lobsters and crabs for fishing bait. I am an old New Englander, and my mouth watered at the sight of the handsome red-and-black spiny lobsters. Occasionally my thoughtful hosts would cook one for me, and everybody would watch in a kind of fascinated horror as I ate it.

Before going to bed, we all drank a cup of "hot drink"—Ovaltine. Adventists eschew all stimulating drinks, even the nonalcoholic ones such as coffee and tea.

### Bell Calls Men to Public Work

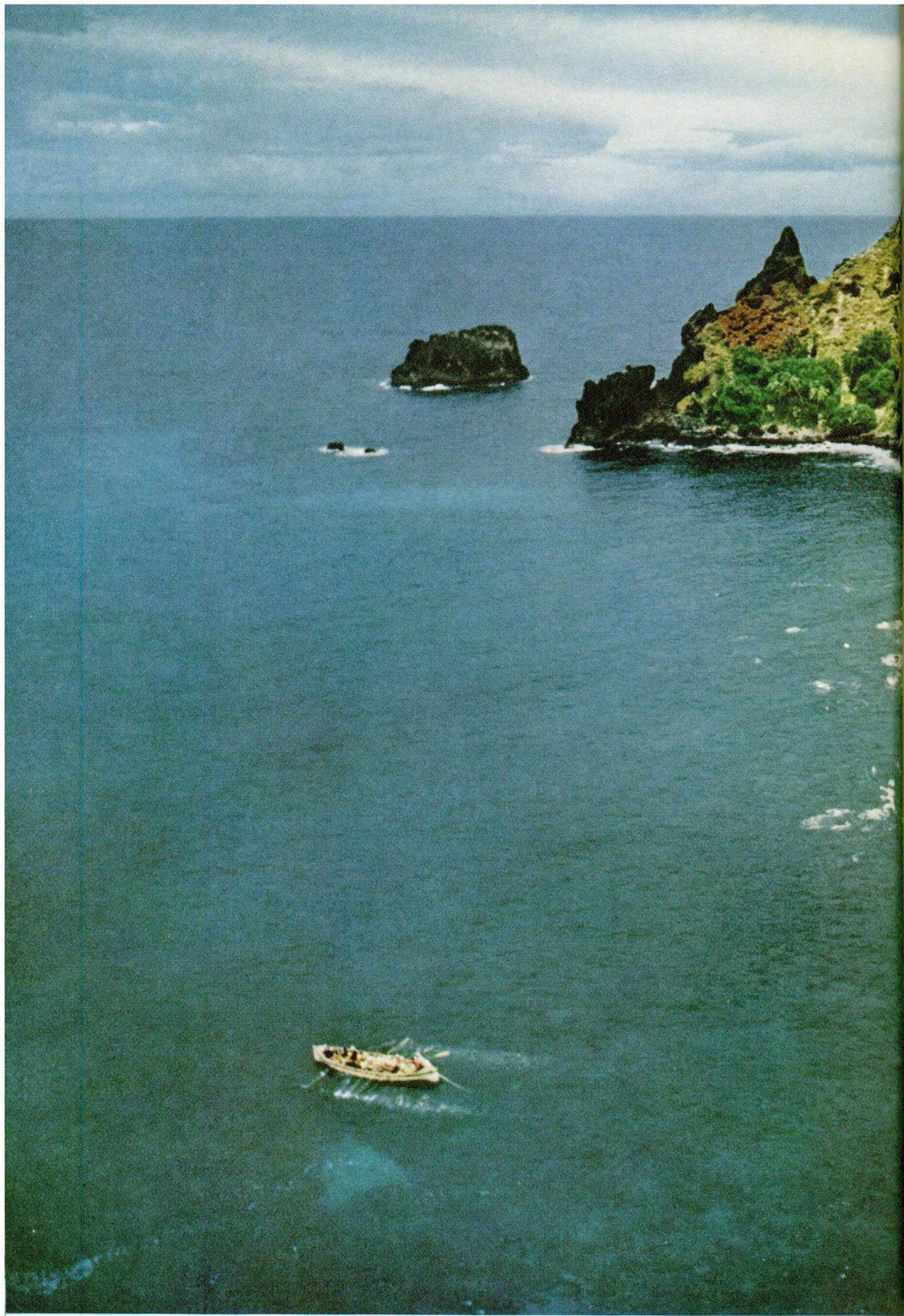
I was awakened my first morning on Pitcairn by the island bell ringing.

"Public work," said Fred, thrusting his head inside my door. When this bell sounds three times, all able-bodied males from 16 to 60 must report to the courthouse and do whatever work the island council decides must be done—road mending, repairs to the landing slide, land clearing. Today the job was to bring the freight up from the landing.

Tom Christian is wireless operator for the island. He must be on the air twice a day, morning and night, and so is exempt from public work. He offered to guide me round Adamstown, and then "up ah hill" to the radio station. Fred, who at 73 is still stronger and more agile than I am, accompanied us.

As we walked down the path, Fred greeted the people we passed: "Bout yawly gwen?"

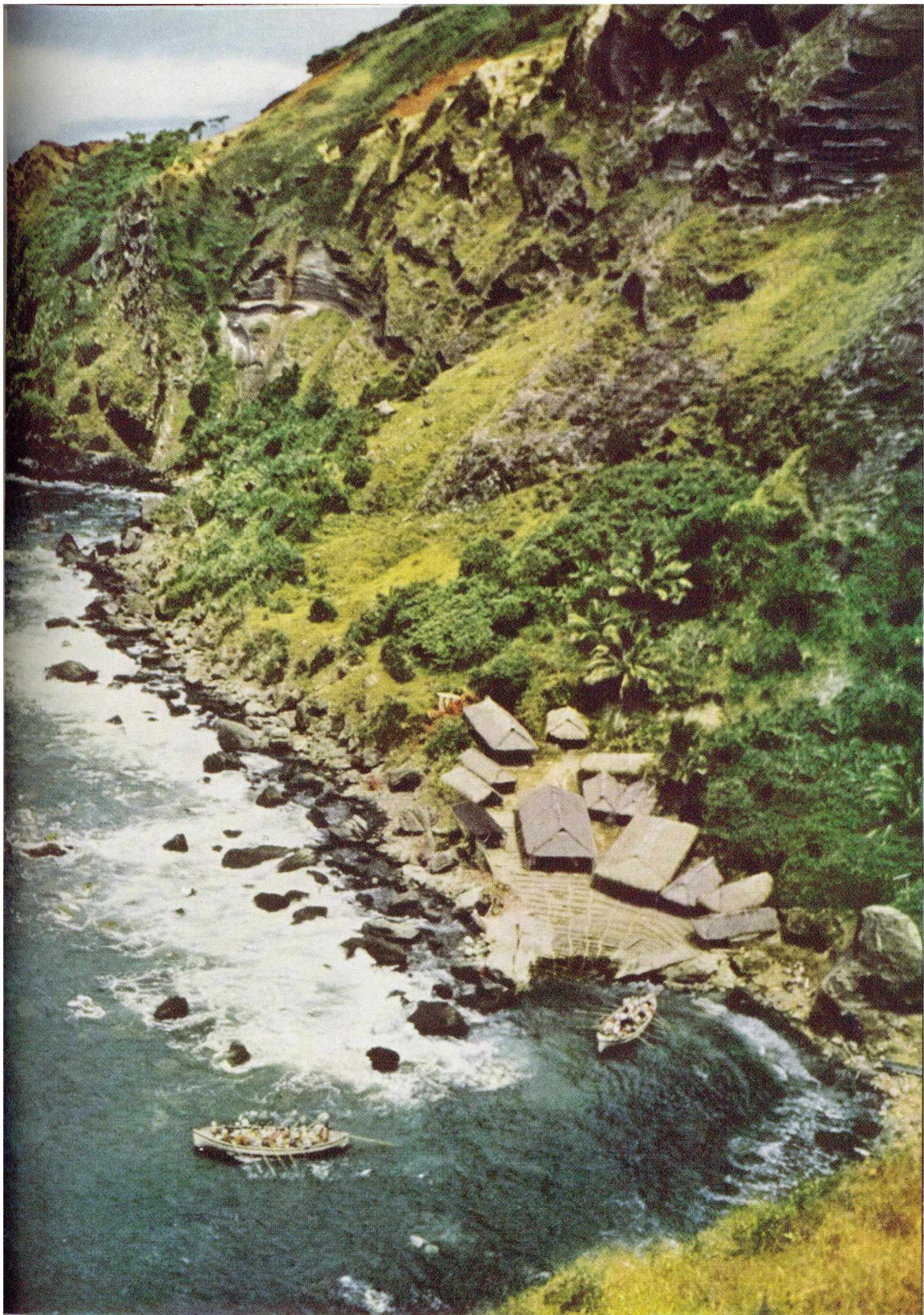




### Three Longboats Pull Out of Bounty Bay to Meet a Visitor at Sea

Ships may arrive at any hour of the day or night. They do not anchor, but heave to a few miles offshore. Boatmen sell souvenirs to passengers and trade fresh fruit for ship's groceries (pages 779, 781).





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*Bounty* Was Run Ashore and Burned in the Shallow Water of This Rocky Inlet

Christian and his followers destroyed the ship in 1790 to hide from searchers. The grid of logs and timbers (right) helps oarsmen haul their craft up to the thatched boathouses beyond reach of the smashing surf.



(Where are you going?) Islanders say this instead of "Good morning."

The women said: "We gwen up ah hill, pick *kumara*" (sweet potato).

To me they said: "Enjoy yourself?"

They seemed to ask it with a genuine concern. Pitcairners are gentle and kindly, and so hospitable that I felt instantly at home.

The main track of Adamstown—"Pitcairn Avenue"—parallels the sea; houses stand at random on both sides. On a flat square cut into the steep slope stand the courthouse, church, and post office (page 771).

Since Pitcairn has no taxes or customs duties, stamps furnish the government's only revenue. Because of collectors' demands, they bring in sizable sums. On July 2, 1957, when a new set of stamps was issued, orders totaled \$1,740 the first day. By the end of the month nearly \$3,000 worth had been sold.

#### Post Office Crowded on Mail Day

While I talked with Roy Clark, the American-born postmaster who came to Pitcairn in 1909, Oscar Clark, assistant postmaster, rang the bell four times: mail call. It was the mail that came in with me from the *Rangitoto*.

Mail day is an exciting time for the islanders. They may not have received mail for weeks, if bad weather has forced ships to bypass them. Roy and Oscar locked themselves in the post office and distributed the mail to pigeonholes, one for each family. They came to the porch and called off a list of names. Only people whose names were called crowded into the miniature building.

After the letters come the parcels. These are most eagerly awaited by the Pitcairners; since there are no shops on the island, all their buying has to be done by mail. Women regularly order from Sears Roebuck and Montgomery Ward in the United States.

I saw some cloth-wrapped parcels that bore a label familiar to me: "O. Mustad and Sons, Oslo, Norway." They contained fishhooks, 65 pounds of them, ordered by one man for all the fishermen on the island.

From the courthouse square switchback paths lead "up ah hill" toward the cultivated ground and the wireless station. We walked through thickets of rose apple, a tree imported to Pitcairn about the turn of the century.

"This stuff's a nuisance," said Tom. "Crowds out everything else."

Yet the rose apple is a boon to deforested Pitcairn. It grows so fast that it keeps the

island hearths well supplied with firewood.

As we climbed higher, we could look down over the scattered red roofs of Adamstown to the open sea (page 785). Lush green valleys, filled with a dense growth of banana and plantain, alternated with ridges running down to the sea. Deep in the valleys bunches of ripe *fe'i*, the red banana, flashed fire-orange.

As we talked, Tom thrashed his way through the high grass and guava bushes beside the trail and emerged with a ripe watermelon. He drew his sheath knife and sliced it lengthwise.

All Pitcairn males wear a sheath knife on the belt (page 769). It looks very seagoing, but its chief use is to slice and peel the fruit that is always in someone's hand.

We sat under a pandanus tree and ate the melon. I leaned against the gray roots that sprang out from the base of the trunk like Gothic flying buttresses and looked out to sea. My thoughts drifted back to the *Bounty*.

After Fletcher Christian and his fellow mutineers set their captain adrift, they tried to settle on the island called Tubuai, about 400 miles south of Tahiti. The natives there were hostile, however, and the mutineers found themselves in a constant state of warfare. The malcontents among the men demanded to return to Tahiti "and there separate where they might get weomen without force."

#### Three Mutineers Ended on Yardarm

Feeling his authority weaken, Christian made this speech:

"Gentlemen, I will carry you, and land you, wherever you please. I desire none to stay with me, but I have one favour to request, that you will grant me the ship, tie the foresail, and give me a few gallons of water, and leave me to run before the wind, and I shall land upon the first island the ship drives to. I have done such an act that I cannot stay at Otaheite."

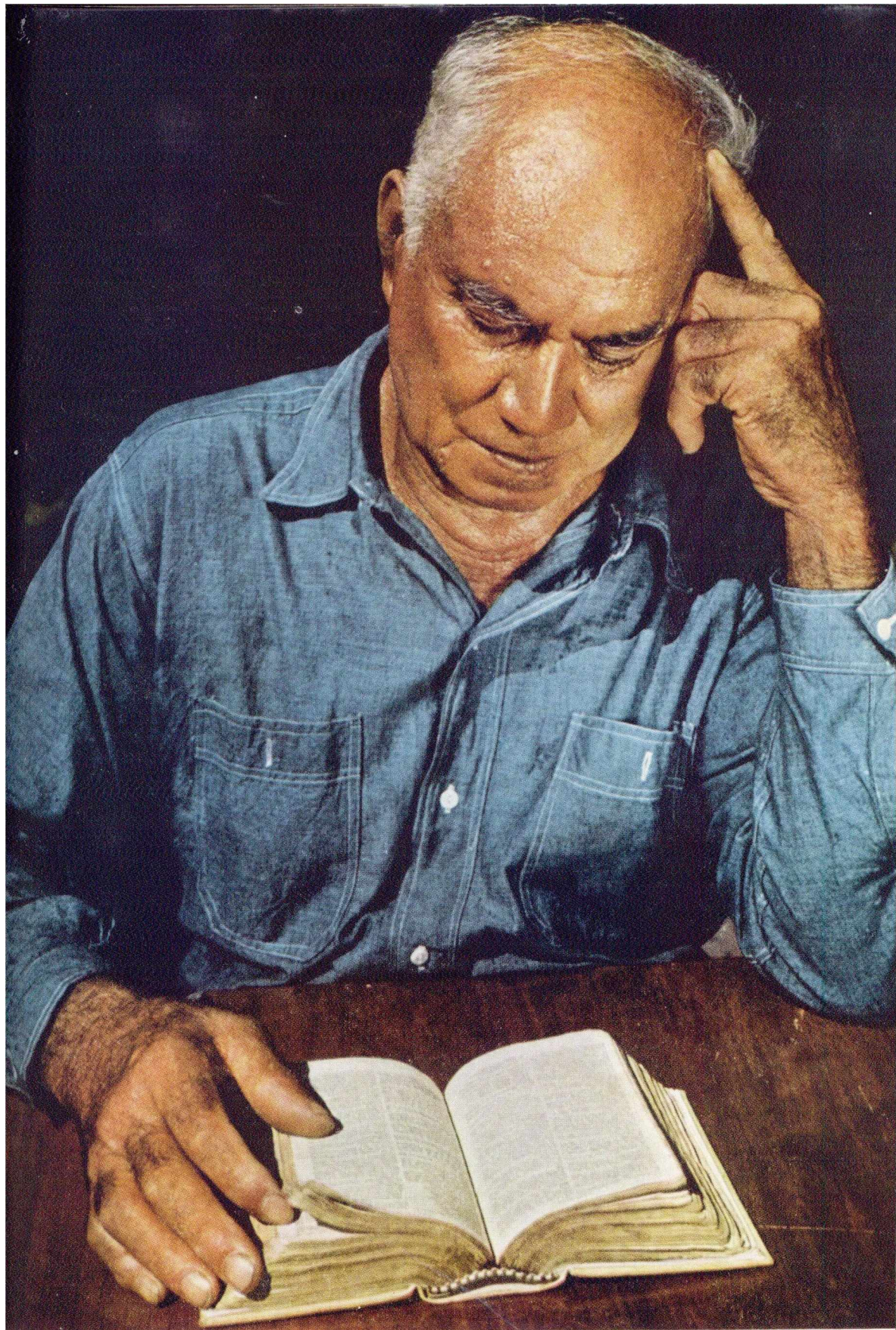
Christian knew the Admiralty had a long arm, and that sooner or later they would send a ship to look for him and his henchmen.

When Christian and his eight comrades set sail, 16 mutineers remained at Tahiti. They were to regret it. True to Christian's fears, the frigate *Pandora* arrived in Matavai Bay a year and a half later and captured all the mutineers except two who had been killed.

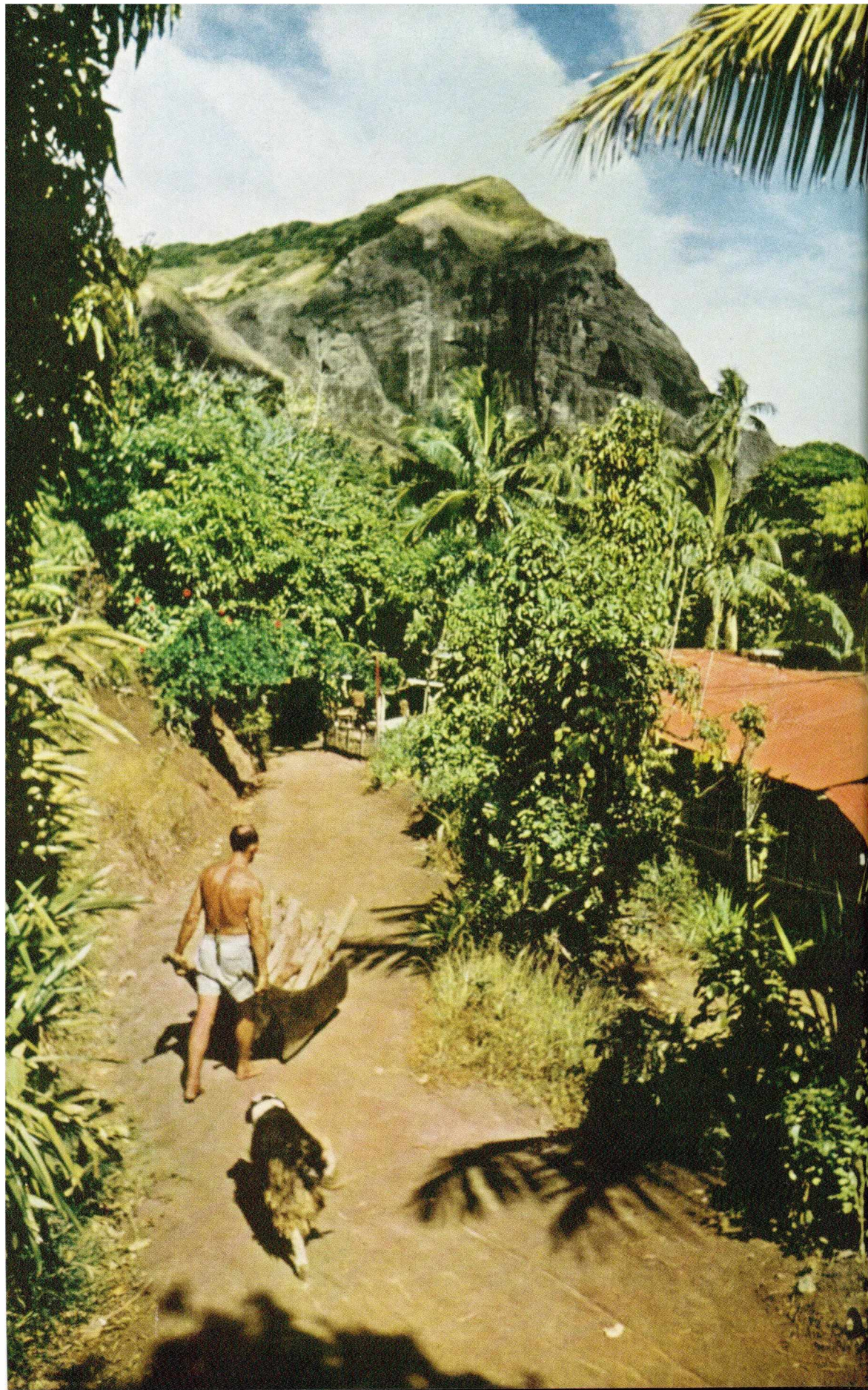
The *Pandora* was wrecked on the Great Barrier Reef on the homeward journey and four mutineers, as well as many seamen, went

(Continued on page 749)













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#### ← Main Street Is Easy on Bare Feet

Barrows are the only wheeled traffic in Adamstown, Pitcairn's sole settlement.

↓ The peculiar shape of wheelbarrows reflects Pitcairn's needs. Beveled front edges slip easily through brush, metal-shod rear runners serve as brakes, and curved handles hook around the hands to prevent runaways on steep descents.

#### ↑ Women Bake Bread Twice a Week

Islanders shape square ovens with an ax from slabs of soft volcanic rock. Hilda Young preheats her oven with firewood from the rose apple, introduced from Norfolk Island before the turn of the century. Fortunately, the tree grows almost as fast as islanders can cut it. Hilda does frying and boiling over a wood fire built on a sandbox (right) known as a bolt.







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### Crack of the Cricket Bat Links the Isle to England

Smooth and level ground is hard to find on Pitcairn, so the cricket pitch, set up on the lawn in front of the school building, is made of matting.

This is an all-woman match. Some wives and girls bowl and bat with the best of the men and sometimes meet them in play.

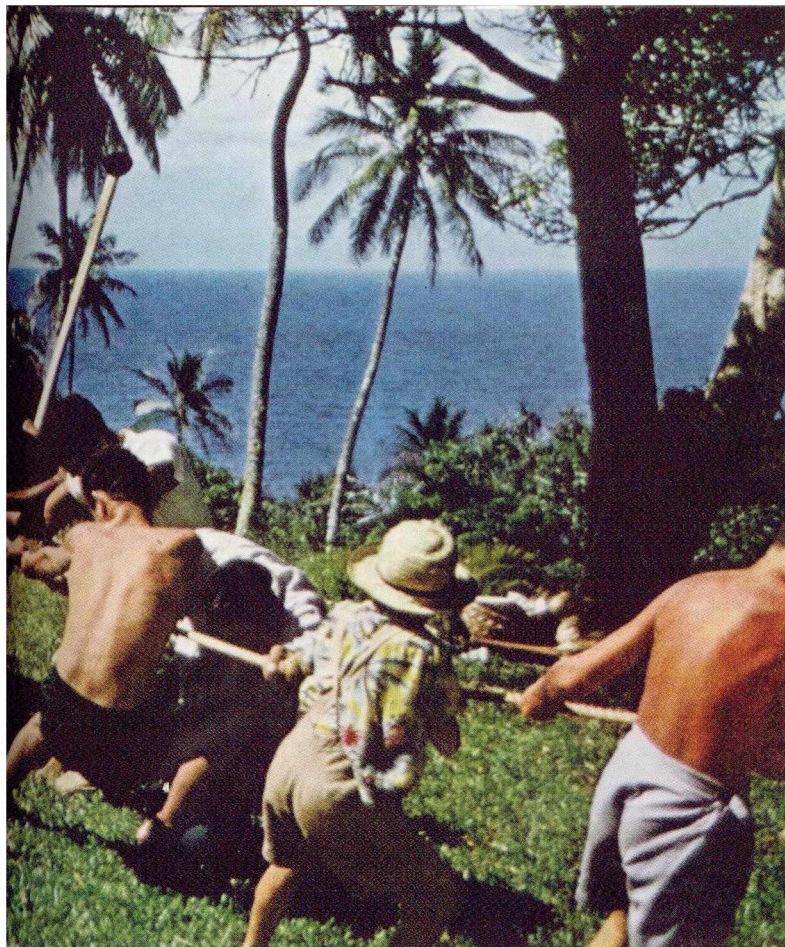
A British Crown Colony since 1838, Pitcairn is administered by the governor of the Fiji Islands, more than 3,000 miles away. Ships passing from Great Britain to New Zealand provide the island's chief contact with the world.

During the whaling era, a century ago, Pitcairn was visited by more American ships than those of any other nation. At that time the dollar was the unit of currency; today New Zealand and British pounds are standard.

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### Men Strain and Pull but Cannot Budge the Women

A tug of war between men and women climaxes field sports held during Christmas and New Year's week.

Invariably the women win such contests. Asked the reason, they grin and reply: "We heavier."

Pitcairn women work just as hard as men and are nearly as strong.

Steep trails as well as the outdoor life help keep inhabitants athletic.

Ordinarily there is little time for play. Fishing, gardening, and souvenir-making keep everyone busy from dawn to dark six days a week.

Pitcairn observes Saturday as the Sabbath, as nearly all the islanders belong to the Seventh-day Adventist Church. A missionary converted the people to Adventism in 1886.

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#### ↑ Islanders Say Grace Before Dinner

No Pitcairner starts a meal without giving thanks, a custom established by the last mutineer, John Adams, about 1800. Here the Hilda Young household sits down to its Christmas feast.

#### Baskets Serve as Christmas Stockings →

Upper: When children are abed, parents go from house to house to fill baskets with sweets and gifts.  
Lower: Adults on Christmas morning inspect family presents, which they found hung on trees.











down with her. The survivors got away in the boats and eventually returned to England, where the 10 mutineers were tried. Four were acquitted and six were found guilty. Three of the latter obtained pardons, and the other three were hanged from the yardarm of a man of war.

What Christian wanted was a hospitable but uninhabited island where he could live out his life without fear of discovery. In a book called *Hawkesworth's Voyages* in the *Bounty's* library he found a description of what sounded like just such an island. It occurred in an account of Capt. Philip Carteret's voyage around the world in 1766-9.

"It was not more than five miles in circumference, and seemed to be uninhabited; it was, however, covered with trees... It lies in latitude 25° 2' S., longitude 133° 21' W.... It is so high that we saw it at the distance of more than fifteen leagues, and it having been discovered by a young gentleman, son to Major Pitcairn of the marines... we called it PITCAIRN'S ISLAND."

The name holds interest for Americans, as the Maj. John Pitcairn mentioned was in command of the British Marines at Concord when the first shot was fired in the American War of Independence. He was later mortally wounded in the battle of Bunker Hill.

Christian decided to steer for Pitcairn. Unfortunately, Captain Carteret had been more than three degrees off in his reckoning of longitude, an error of 178 nautical miles west of the true position.

Christian seems to have cruised for weeks looking for this island, and he nearly had another mutiny on his hands before sighting it.

When the mutineers first landed, they found signs that humans had been there before them. Rude carvings were cut into cliff faces, polished stone axes lay about, and near one *marae*, a platform built of stones on which stood crude idols, they found a human skeleton. But they saw not a living soul. Today we know these remains belong to primitive

Polynesians who once lived on Pitcairn Island.

No one knows the exact date on which the *Bounty* arrived at Pitcairn Island, but it was in the first days of 1790. Having landed all the stores, plants, and livestock, the ship's crew stripped her, ran her ashore, and burned her on January 23, 1790.

Christian divided all the land into nine portions among his fellow seamen and himself, leaving none for the Polynesian men. Their resentment smoldered; later it was to burst violently into flame.

Through succeeding generations the land of Pitcairn has been so subdivided through inheritance that by the time I arrived on the island some people owned only four feet of ground. Others are completely landless.

Even individual trees have owners, but no one objects if anyone who is hungry picks an orange or a coconut.

"All right you pick coc'nut," Fred said, "so long you eat it under the tree. Cahn't cahly it away."

### Wind Powers Island Transmitter

Climbing again, we emerged on a grassy hill, almost 900 feet above sea level. Here stands the radio station. The transmitter works on batteries powered by a wind charger. Tom Christian listens for ships' calls every morning and transmits in the evening. His point of contact for regular communications is Rarotonga, 1,900 miles away.

Fred and I waited while Tom took his readings and sent out a call. No one answered; so we continued our stroll around the plateau.

I had left northern winter behind when I crossed the Equator, and now in mid-December it was high summer on Pitcairn. Sea breezes keep the temperature pleasant most of the time on this subtropical island. There is usually plenty of rain—fortunately, because the island depends on it for its water supply. The houses have corrugated iron roofs from which the rain runs through gutters and spouts into cement tanks.

The top of Pitcairn consists of an undulating savanna, set here and there with gray-trunked pandanus trees and thickets of dark-green rose apple. The highest point, 1,100 feet, is on a ridge above Palva Valley, west of the island's center. The early voyagers all described Pitcairn as being heavily wooded, but now axes and goats have rendered it nearly treeless, as far as big timber is concerned.

As we walked along a path skirting a cliff

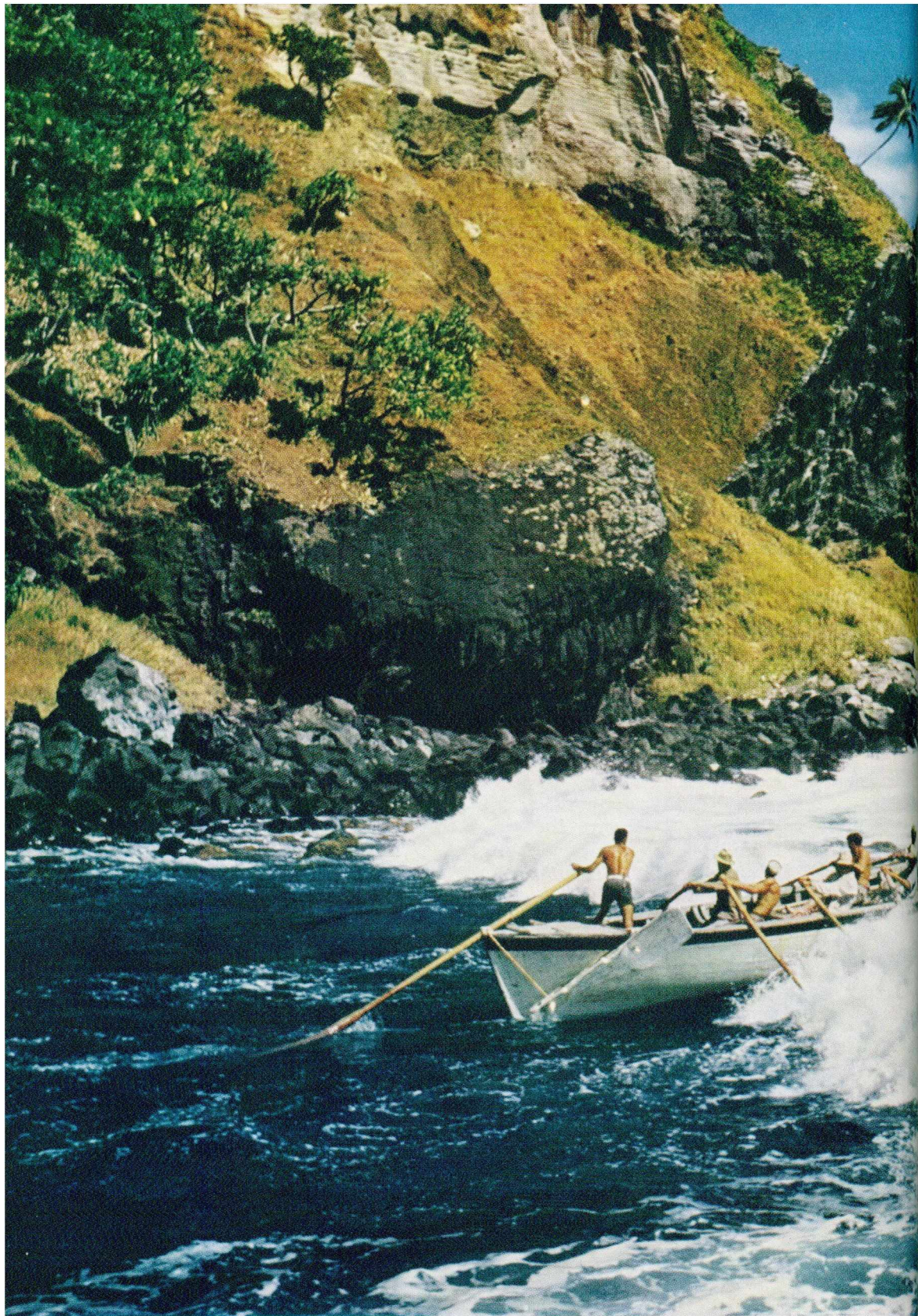
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### The Descendants of Deep-sea Voyagers Are Superb Rough-water Boatmen

Pitcairn men have been called "the world's finest surf boatmen." All are trained from the age of 14 to row, sail, and steer.

Each of three boats on the island has a captain. Crewmen seem to pay little attention to him until moments of critical action, then all pull as one man.





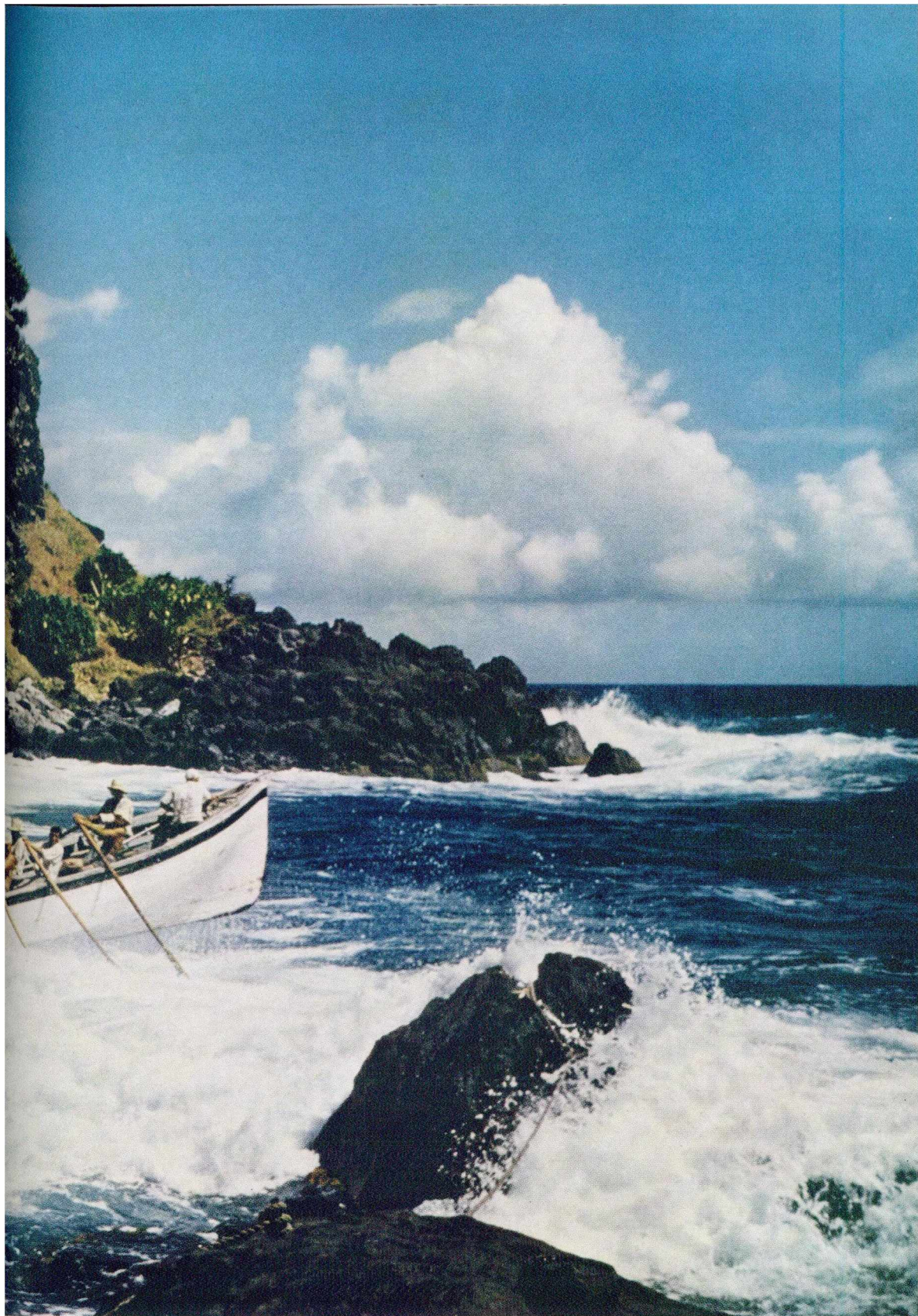
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### Oars Flash in Unison as a Longboat Leaps the Pacific's Crashing Surf

Rollers incessantly smash against Pitcairn's volcanic slopes. Bounty Bay, a rock-bound inlet, is a bay in name only. Nowhere does the island's six-mile circumference give full shelter from the sea's angry moods.





**A Long Steering Sweep Guides the Boat Past the Sharp Rocks of Bounty Bay**

Pitcairn longboats are framed in native mango wood; passing ships contribute the planking. Once free of the surf, the rudder is shipped, the mast stepped, and the boat sails out to the hove-to ship.



that dropped almost sheer to the foaming surf, I could see bearded billy goats and their bleating nannies skipping down cliff faces. Reforestation is a losing business as long as the goats remain on the island. They clip green shoots right down to the ground. Cutting of firewood and the cropping of the goats has caused erosion on several steep slopes. Whole hillsides have slipped down into the sea, leaving only the raw red clay.

Pitcairn is only 2 miles long by about a mile wide, and after 167 years of habitation every prominent rock, cove, or cliff has acquired a name (map, pages 734-5).

I had seen one point on the southwest coast of the island marked "Oh Dear" on the map, and I asked Fred how it got its name.

"Well, native man wading 'long shore there, drop his *malu* [from Tahitian *maro*, loin-cloth] in water. You know that's all they wear, and he look down and say 'Oh dear!'"

Another point offshore on the west side bears the designation "Headache."

"One man gwen fishin' 'long that place, when his boy say: 'Let's go back, my head hurts!' Before he get him back, he dead."

The old accounts speak of "clouds of sea birds," but today one sees only occasional frigate birds swooping and gliding on their tapered high-aspect-ratio wings, opening and shutting their black scissor tails, and pairs of snow-white terns fluttering in graceful arcs against the dark-green foliage of the valleys.

In our walk I saw only one species of land bird, a warbler with erectile head feathers, that chirped and hopped busily among the rose apple trees. Pitcairners call them sparrows, doubtless because they reminded the English sailors of their own little town bird.

### Birthday Party a Lucullan Feast

We slipped and skidded down a steep trail that plunged toward Adamstown. Near the bottom we met a man wheeling a barrow.

"You bin firewood?" Fred asked.

"Ee-yeh. Pick some plun [banana] too."

From one of the houses just below came the high, shrieking laughter of a woman, a sound as Polynesian as baked pig.

We met Flora coming down from the hill at the trail that debouched at Fred's door. "Bin up planting taty [potatoes]," she called. "Yawly invited long fa us go birthday party."

I had a quick bath in half an oil drum filled with heated rain water, dressed, took a flashlight and joined the family going up the hill.

About 50 people were seated at two long tables made of planks laid on trestles. Piled high on the tables were unbelievable quantities of food: big platters of boiled goat meat, corned beef stewed in coconut milk, chicken, boiled fish, pilhi (made of yams, plantains, bananas, or pumpkin), maize, loaves of freshly baked white bread, mounds of peas and beans, hills of butter, arrowroot, and pineapple pudding, avocados, rock melons (muskmelons), mangoes, and watermelons. Here and there stood pitchers of "drink," a sweet, red liquid made by steeping strawberries in sugar water.

And of course, baked breadfruit.

### "Coc'nut Milk Make Sawdust Taste Good"

The Pitcairners are amazing trenchermen. I thought I could hold my own at table, but I was forced to yield to professionals. Fred urged me to have some more beef in coconut milk.

"Coc'nut milk make even sawdust taste good," he said.

I believe it. The coconut milk used in Polynesian cookery is not the water that comes from inside the nut. It is made by steeping the flaked meat of a ripe coconut in hot water, then kneading it. The creamy liquid that results imparts a delicate flavor to whatever is cooked in it, seems to tenderize meats, and is very nutritious.

Len Brown watched the fish he had helped catch disappear.

"My, dem soon scoff up hem fish; want one he piece, tak' whole platter."

At length even Fred, the master of us all, had to stop. The host looked anxiously at Fred's stilled knife and fork and asked,

"Can I bring you anything?"

"Yes," murmured Fred, "bring me another stomach." He smiled beatifically and added, "I always say Fletcher Christian find a good place to hide."

I could barely croak my admiration to Jessie Clark, who laughed and said, "We have only one meal a day on Pitcairn: start in morning and end at night."

Actually, two meals a day are eaten: breakfast, a heavy meal at about 11 o'clock when everyone comes down from working on the hill, and supper at about 8 or 9 at night.

After the party Chester Young told me that the old island dishes are disappearing.

"Have you ever tasted humpus-bumpus?" he asked. "Eddie? China-in-the-milk? Potta?"



## English Sailors and Tahitian Women Bred a Handsome, Sturdy Race

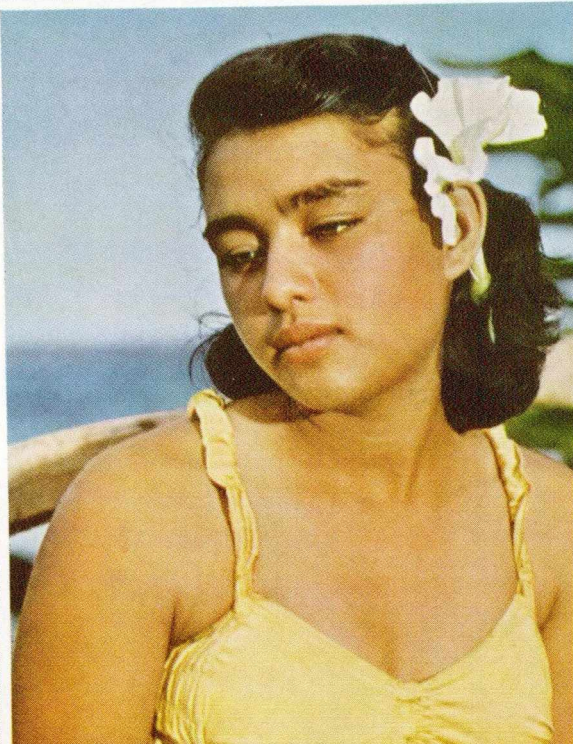
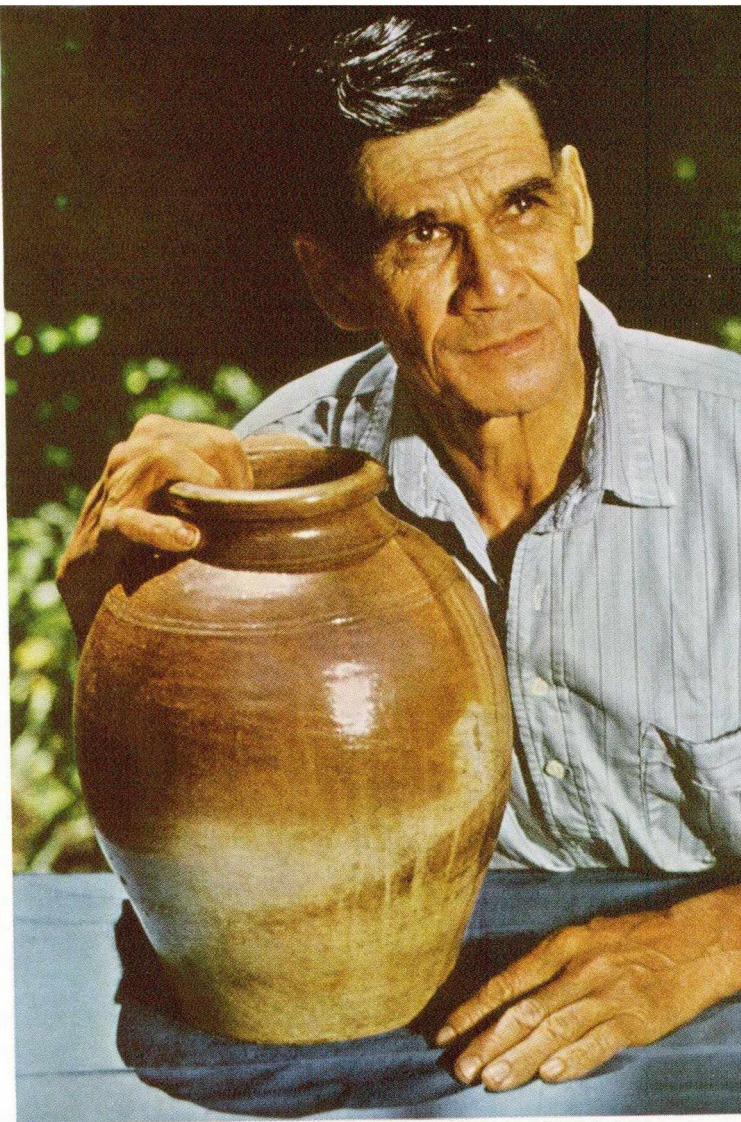
Eight *Bounty* seamen and 19 Polynesians joined Fletcher Christian when he left Tahiti to colonize Pitcairn in 1789. The initial settlement of 28 has grown to 153.

→ John Christian, a direct descendant of Fletcher Christian, was chief magistrate when Queen Elizabeth made her Empire Tour in 1953. John and his wife journeyed to Fiji to be presented to the Queen. He holds an earthenware jug taken from the *Bounty* before her destruction in 1790.

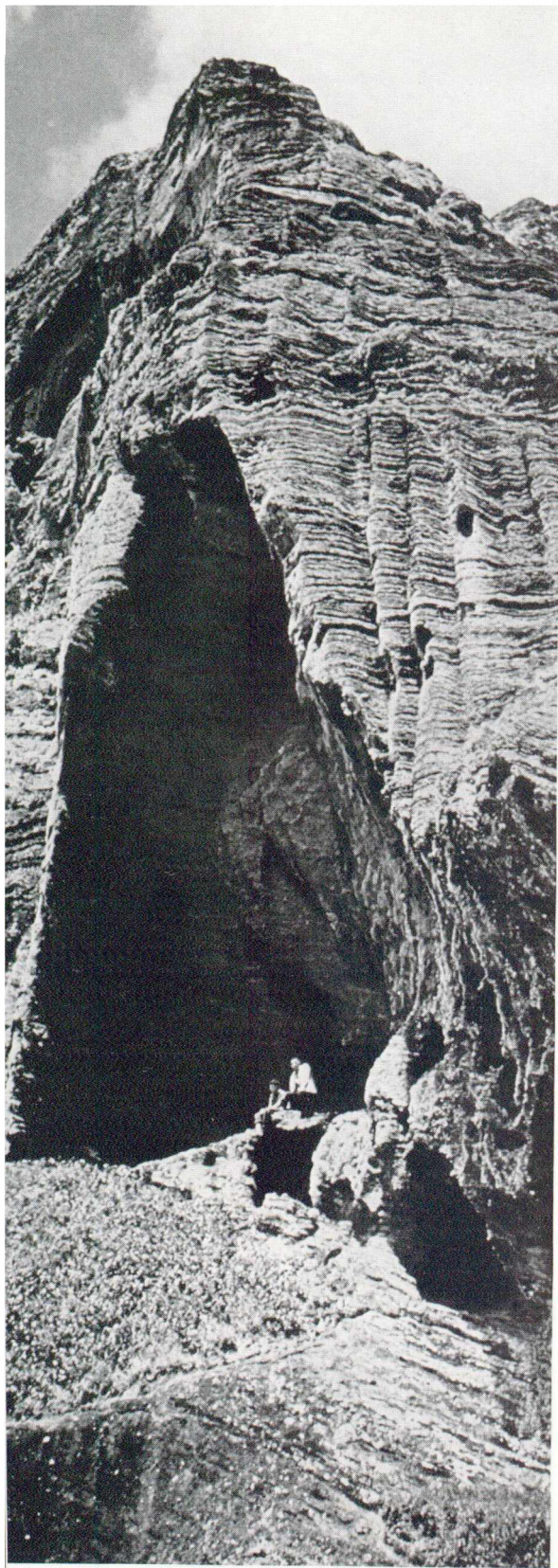
↓ Aunt Lily Warren, 79 years old, proudly wears the medal of the Order of the British Empire. Queen Elizabeth bestowed the honor on Aunt Lily in recognition of 50 years' service as midwife on Pitcairn. Lily has officially retired, but: "If they ask for me, I go," she says.

One of many islanders helped into the world by Lily is Ailsa Young (right). At 15 years she wears the flower and soft good looks of her Tahitian ancestors. Few Pitcairners look so strongly Polynesian; most resemble their English forefathers. They speak an accented English, mixed with some Tahitian words and phrases. The younger generation, having a New Zealand schoolmaster, is losing the island way of speech.

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### From This Cave Fletcher Christian Anxiously Scanned the Sea

Tradition says the mutineer retired to his high lookout to watch for ships "half in fear, half in hope." Trees screened the opening in Christian's day.

"Not yet," I admitted.

"Why, man, you've not eaten Pitcairn food."

All these I savored in time. Humpus-bumpus is made of mashed ripe bananas with arrowroot flour, fried as fritters or baked.

Flora told me about Eddie, bananas cooked in coconut milk.

"It's not Eddie the name," she said, "but they put it that way. Eddie—that's Lucy's husband—he like it, so that's why they call it for him."

China-in-the-milk is another favorite way of preparing green bananas in coconut milk; potta is made by stewing taro greens in the same liquid.

### Goat Fence Divides the Island

As the days went by, I became more and more absorbed into the life of the community. Allen Wotherspoon, the schoolteacher, had started a men's and a ladies' club. One night I attended a meeting of the former.

Anything may be discussed. One man said that people should not shoot "white birds," the lovely terns that fly in pairs along the cliffs. Another brought up the question of whether or not a small boat should be built to make use of a 12-horsepower gasoline engine that had been left on the island by an American scientist. Most men thought this not practical because of the difficulty of obtaining gasoline, since ships refuse to carry it. Lighting plants and other engines on the island run on diesel fuel.

Then someone brought up the question of goats. The chairman looked resignedly heavenward and everyone laughed. Goats are a sore point on Pitcairn.

The original goats were probably imported by the mutineers. There are now 400-odd goats on Pitcairn, confined to the southern half of the island by a five-foot-high fence.

Anti-goat Pitcairners say:

"They nuisances, do lots of damage."

Pro-goaters say, with Flora:

"If war come, ships cut right off, and we'll go stranded with no meat." Pitcairners remember vividly the war years, when they were almost completely isolated.

A goatmaster, elected each year, is in charge of all island goats. With eight helpers he brands the new kids as they come along. No household may keep more than two breeding nannies. The goatmaster also organizes shoots when the people need fresh goat meat.









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### *Bounty's* Remains Are Discovered After 167 Years on the Ocean Floor

Though it has been known since January 23, 1790, the day *Bounty* burned, that she lay at the bottom of Bounty Bay, no one had found the exact site until National Geographic writer-photographer Luis Marden, using self-contained diving apparatus, discovered the spot in January of 1957.

Because the hull had been destroyed by fire and sea action, no signs of a wreck could be seen. Twenty to 40 feet of turbulent water covered the site.

Mr. Marden located the *Bounty* by estimating the ship's position from a known group of iron ballast bars close to shore, then searching for unusual shapes in the limestone-encrusted sea bottom. He cut the objects from the calcareous growths with hammer and chisel.

→ Marden examines some of the objects he discovered along the line of the ship's keel. He holds copper fittings. Rudder pintle, or pivot pin, and oarlock lie in foreground.

Above: Thomas Christian, great-great-great-grandson of Fletcher Christian, holds the 15-pound pintle. He learned Aqua-Lung diving from the author.

← Broad arrow, symbol of British Government ownership, was struck into the larger copper and bronze pieces.

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Kodachrome (right) by Thomas Christian









## Original Plan of the *Bounty*: His Majesty's Armed Vessel Was Born a Merchantman

When the British Admiralty in 1787 sought a ship to send to the South Sea in quest of breadfruit, it bought the 220-ton *Bethia* for £1,950. She was refitted in Deptford at a cost of £4,456 and renamed *Bounty*.

The vessel was armed with four short four-pounders and ten swivel guns, mainly for protection against hostile islanders. Her hull was completely sheathed in copper to protect the wood from teredos and to lessen fouling.

Copper sheathing had been tried for the first time in 1761. The Admiralty learned that dissimilar metals such as copper sheathing and exposed iron hull fittings when immersed in the sea set up a galvanic current that eroded the iron. Copper or bronze fittings solved the problem.

This Admiralty plan shows *Bounty* as she was refitted to carry breadfruit plants. At the stern,

the entire great cabin, normally the captain's quarters, was made over into a plant conservatory. The cabin floor was sheathed with lead, and long racks were installed with holes for the plant pots. Lead drains caught precious dripping water for re-use.

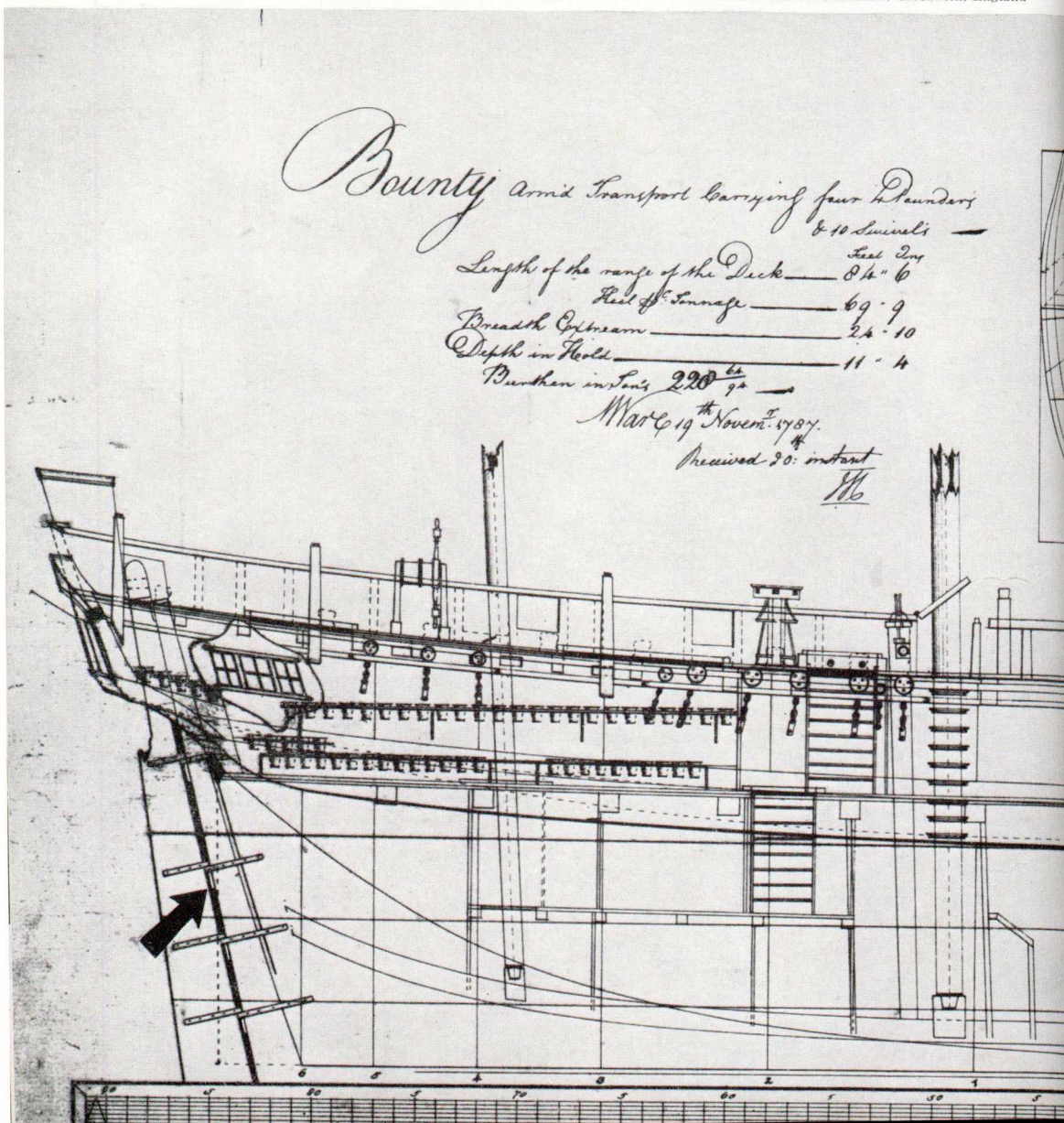
When the author discovered the spot where the *Bounty* went down, he uncovered an elbow-shaped lead pipe, in all probability one of these drains.

While fishing in 1933, islander Parkin Christian found *Bounty*'s rudder and one pintle some distance from the site of the hull. Apparently, following seas had wrenched them off as the ship drove ashore. Later Parkin raised them by grappling.

Superimposed arrow at left indicates the probable position of the broken pintle shown on page 760.

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National Maritime Museum, Greenwich, England





### *Bounty* Sails for the Movies

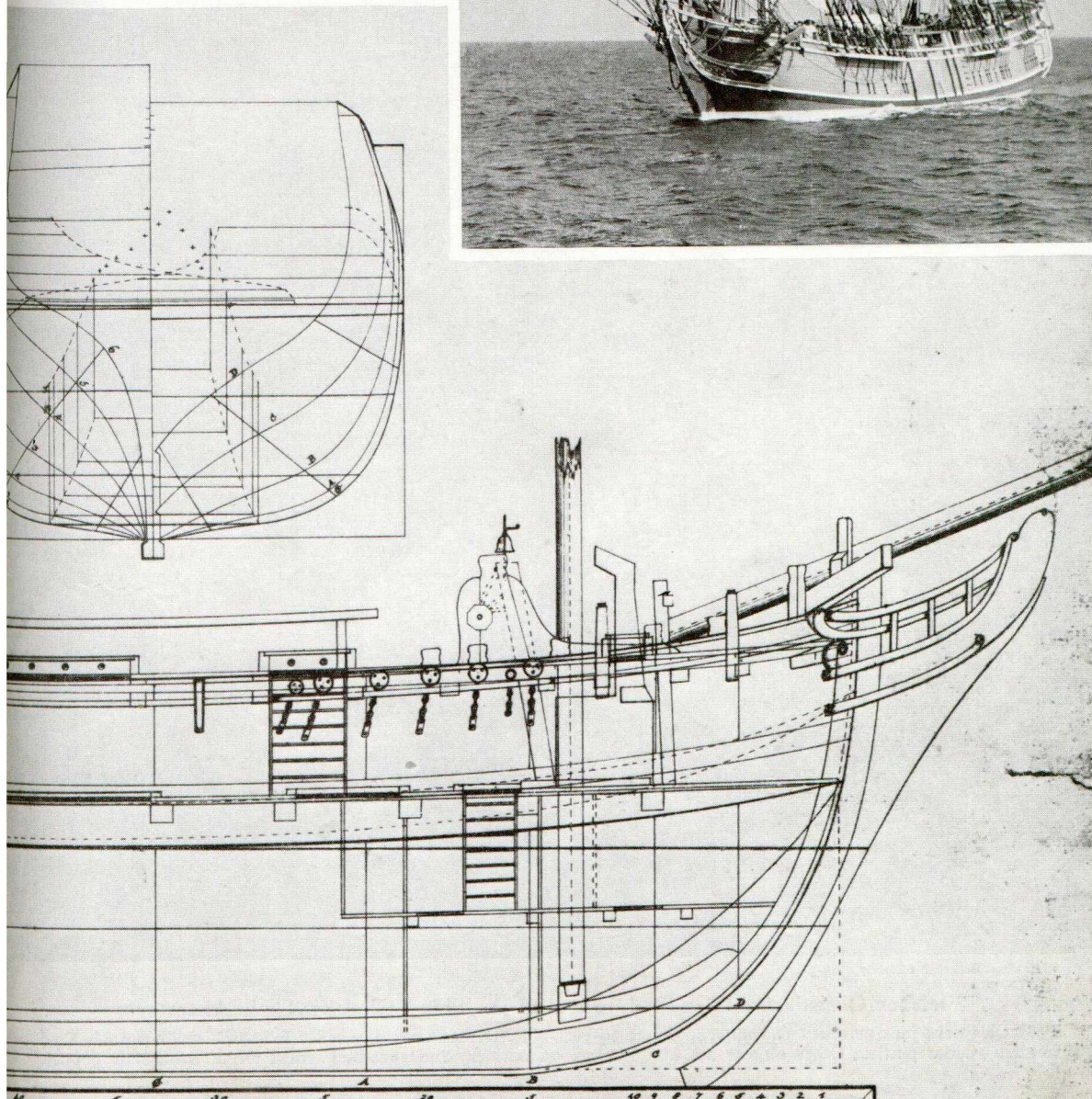
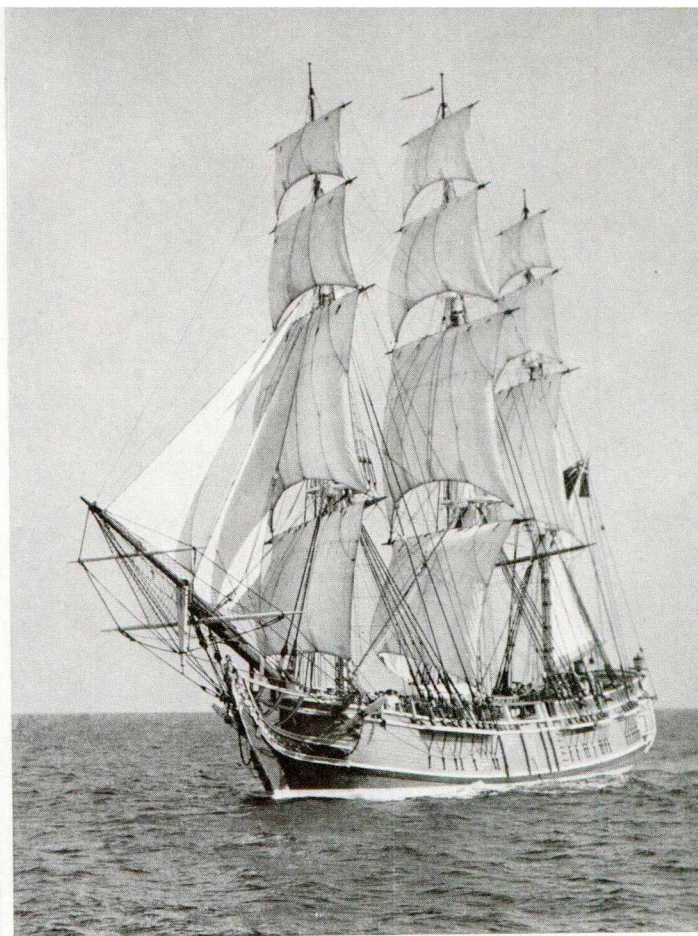
When Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer in 1935 filmed Nordhoff and Hall's classic, *Mutiny on the Bounty*, the studio built an exact copy. Charles Laughton as a brutal Captain Bligh paced her quarterdeck and snarled his orders. While the film cast Bligh as an unmitigated villain, history has much to say in his behalf.

The new *Bounty* was meticulously reconstructed from Admiralty plans. Here, under all sail to royals, she foots along in a light breeze.

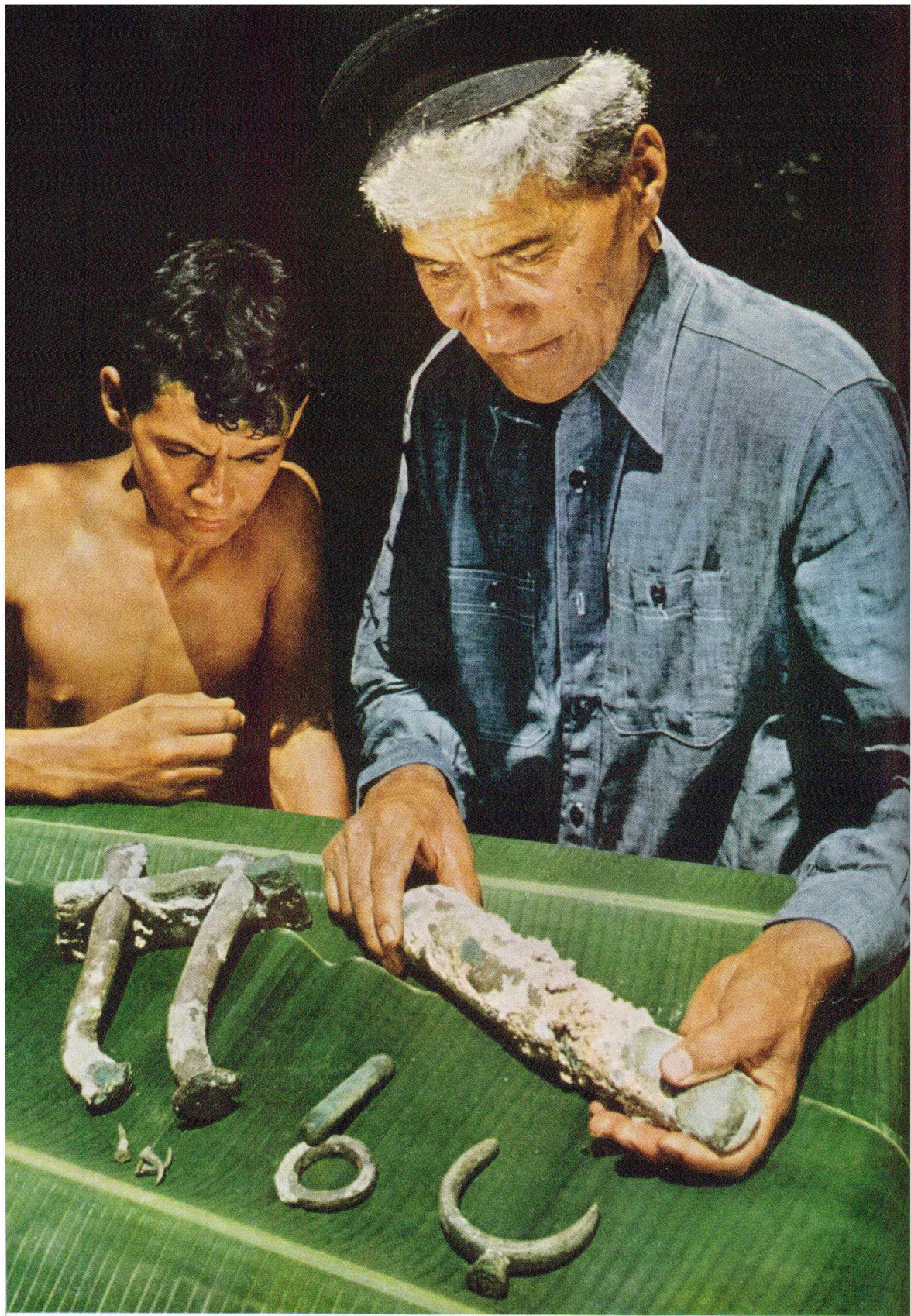
Bligh complained that the original *Bounty*, though ship-rigged, was too small for a voyage around the world. He records that "she was ornamented with a pretty figurehead of a woman in a riding habit."

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Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer







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### Fletcher Christian's Heirs Study Parts of the Ship Sailed by Their Ancestor

Fred Christian, four generations removed, shows 16-year-old Fletcher Christian relics from the sea bottom. Fred holds a rudder pintle. Other objects are hull fittings, an oarlock, and sheathing nails, all of bronze or copper.



Nine years after the *Bounty* landed, all the Tahitian men were dead, and only two mutineers, Alexander Smith, seaman, and midshipman Edward Young, were still alive.

Young died of asthma a year later, leaving Alexander Smith the only man on Pitcairn, patriarch of a flock of women and children.

When Capt. Mayhew Folger in the ship *Topaz* of Boston called at Pitcairn to look for seals in February of 1808, he was astonished to see a canoe put out to sea from what he thought was an uninhabited island. In the canoe were three young men, bearing presents of fruit and a pig.

The youths took the captain ashore to meet their "father Aleck" Smith.

### *Bounty* Bible Goes Home to Pitcairn

Smith is better known as John Adams, the name by which he called himself when other vessels touched at the island some years later. It was his real name; Smith was a pseudonym he assumed when signing the *Bounty*'s articles.

Adams one night dreamed of the Angel Gabriel, who showed him the wickedness of his past life and put the fear of divine retribution in him. From that time forward, Adams began to instruct the little community in religion, using for the purpose a Bible that had come in the *Bounty* (page 741).

Years later, the Bible was given to a visiting whaler, who took it to the United States. There it remained until 1950, when it was returned to Pitcairn. It now stands in an honored place in the church.

Captain Folger wrote to the Admiralty telling of his discovery—the first news the outside world had heard of the whereabouts of Christian and his companions. Oddly enough, he and one of his officers aboard *Topaz* gave three different accounts of Fletcher Christian's death, all based on conversations with Adams. One version said Christian was shot by the Tahitians; another that he died a natural death; still another that he threw himself from the cliffs and was dashed to death on the rocks below, the last perhaps confusing Christian's death with that of McCoy.

Why should Adams have told two or three different versions of Christian's end? Could it be that he did it to conceal the fact that Christian had escaped from Pitcairn and returned to England?

In the years 1808 and 1809 rumors were current in the Lake District of England, Christian's birthplace, that Fletcher Christian had returned to that part of England.

At about that time Capt. Peter Heywood,



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### Ballast Bars Lie in Crashing Surf

Heavy seas made diving impossible in *Bounty* Bay except in rare calms. Two divers raised a 300-pound iron bar only with the greatest difficulty. Limy encrustations so firmly cemented the bars to the bottom that the salvagers had to break them free with crowbar and sledge.

Tom Christian, one of two Pitcairn men the author taught to dive, here measures the span of a bar.

late midshipman of the *Bounty*, who had been tried for mutiny, found guilty, and then pardoned by the King, was walking in Fore Street, Plymouth. He noticed walking ahead of him a man who reminded him strongly of Fletcher Christian. The stranger, hearing footsteps behind him, turned round, looked at Heywood and instantly ran off.

Since then, some students of the *Bounty*'s history have speculated on the possibility that Fletcher Christian returned to England. C. S. Wilkinson, in his book *The Wake of the Bounty*, even suggests that it was Christian who inspired Samuel Taylor Coleridge to write *The Ancient Mariner*.

(Continued on page 767)



### ***Bounty's* Anchor Fluke Protrudes from Sand Like a Broad Arrow**

A happy accident uncovered the relic. Irving Johnson's yacht *Yankee*, which called in February, 1957, moored outside Bounty Bay in calm weather, and crew members dived from a launch close to the ship. Using an Aqua-Lung, Wilford Fawcett spotted the fluke by chance on his first dive.

The anchor's position in 50 feet of water well outside Bounty Bay leads the author to believe that Fletcher Christian dropped a stern anchor, then paid out enough cable to enable him to enter the rock-bound inlet. Tradition records that a bow line was made fast to a tree. The ship was probably held thus, bow to shore, while she was stripped of everything useful before burning. As anchor chain had not yet come into use, flames must have burned through the hemp cable, leaving the anchor on the bottom.

Some years ago a similar anchor was recovered in Mata-vai Bay, Tahiti. Island tradition says it was one of the *Bounty's*. As Bligh's careful log did not record such a loss, the big iron hook must have been one of two left by Christian. On his return to Tahiti after the mutiny, Christian took aboard native men and women, then sailed secretly in the night, abandoning the anchors.

Today the anchor from Matavai Bay rests in the Auckland War Memorial Museum in New Zealand. Its shape and dimensions correspond exactly to the one shown.

*Bounty* carried at least five anchors—two bowers, a sheet, a stream, a kedge—and probably spares in the hold.

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## Raised from Ocean's Gloom, the Anchor Sees Sunlight Again

Irving Johnson volunteered to raise the relic. With consummate seamanship he maneuvered the 96-foot-long *Yankee* through heavy swells into position directly above the anchor. He then lowered his own Danforth anchor to waiting divers, who passed a wire loop from fluke to fluke. Using her winch, *Yankee* then took a strain. The mass of iron trembled and shifted, but would not break free from the sand.

"I remembered," says Captain Johnson, "that my dentist, when pulling a tooth, yanks from several directions, so I maneuvered the *Yankee* to take a strain alternately from each side."

After 15 minutes of hauling and jockeying, the old anchor suddenly let go in a cloud of sand (below).

Here, as the hook emerges, divers make fast extra lines.

→ The salvaged 12-foot anchor rests on the landing in Bounty Bay. When it broke free from the bottom, most of the wooden stock remained buried and only the fragment shown at the feet of young Fletcher Christian was recovered.

The anchor is the old Admiralty pattern, which was distinguished by straight-V flukes. Rounded flukes did not come into use until about 1810. The short length of chain attached to the ringbolt probably was used to make the anchor fast when it was raised to the cathead.

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## It Takes a Strong Back to Work the Ancient Pit Saw

Pitcairn men are skilled woodworkers. Those who emigrate to New Zealand usually work as shipwrights and carpenters.

Three men usually work on a sizable piece of wood. To keep the long blade from pinching, the third workman taps a wedge into the cut. Big timbers are imported from Australia and New Zealand.

### Jigsaw Canoes Are Built in Halves

Original settlers hollowed dugouts from single logs, as on Tahiti, but soon ran out of big trees. Their descendants are forced to construct boats of cunningly fitted pieces. Wood is so precious that no block, however irregular, is discarded. The author counted more than 40 pieces in this canoe.

Natural curvature is used wherever possible; some bits are shaped by the adz. Strakes are screwed together and calked with pitch. Surprisingly, these patchwork boats stand years of pounding in heavy seas.

Canoes used to be made from wood of the *bureau*, a kind of hibiscus. Nowadays island women peel so much of its bark to make souvenir "grass" skirts that few trees get a chance to mature. Mango and breadfruit wood, used as substitutes, are heavier but last longer.

Islanders use canoes chiefly for fishing. In calm weather a fleet of 25 boats may take off for fishing grounds offshore. Mostly bottom-dwelling species, such as snappers, take the bait, but occasionally jacks, albacore, and tuna sweep in from the open sea and strike.

Hooks are baited with crab or lobster speared by women in rock crannies along the shore. Best catches are made at night under torchlight.

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A sum of gold ducats Captain Bligh carried has never been accounted for. Could Fletcher Christian have used it to buy passage back to England? The question adds one more facet of mystery to the many-sided adventure of the *Bounty*.

Fred had told me that his grandfather Thursday October Christian (son of the original Thursday October Christian, Fletcher's first born) had pointed out a spot next to a big pandanus tree where Fletcher Christian had been shot while he worked in his garden, and buried by the women who found him.

I persuaded Fred, Tom, Len, and young Fletcher to go up the hill with me to dig at the place, to see if we could find any trace of a body. It was a blazing hot day, and my friends trudged along without enthusiasm. They carried "muttocks" for the digging.

On a hillside waist high in grass Fred pointed to the spot, and the young men set to work. When they had dug a hole about two feet deep, the three gravediggers threw down their mattocks and disappeared into the grass. In five minutes they returned carrying a big watermelon and some pineapples.

We sat in the scant shade and cut up the fruit.

Pitcairn pineapples are the best tasting in the world, I make no doubt. The juice runs from them in a continuous stream when you bite into them, and the flavor must be tasted to be believed.

It was too hot for much exertion. Halfheartedly the boys dug down to about four feet. Then Fred said:

"I doan' think them black wimmens bury him—or if they do, they doan' have time to bury him deep. So cahn't be here."

We picked up the tools and walked down the hill. I still do not know whether Fletcher Christian is buried on Pitcairn or in England.

### Pitcairn a Regular Port of Call

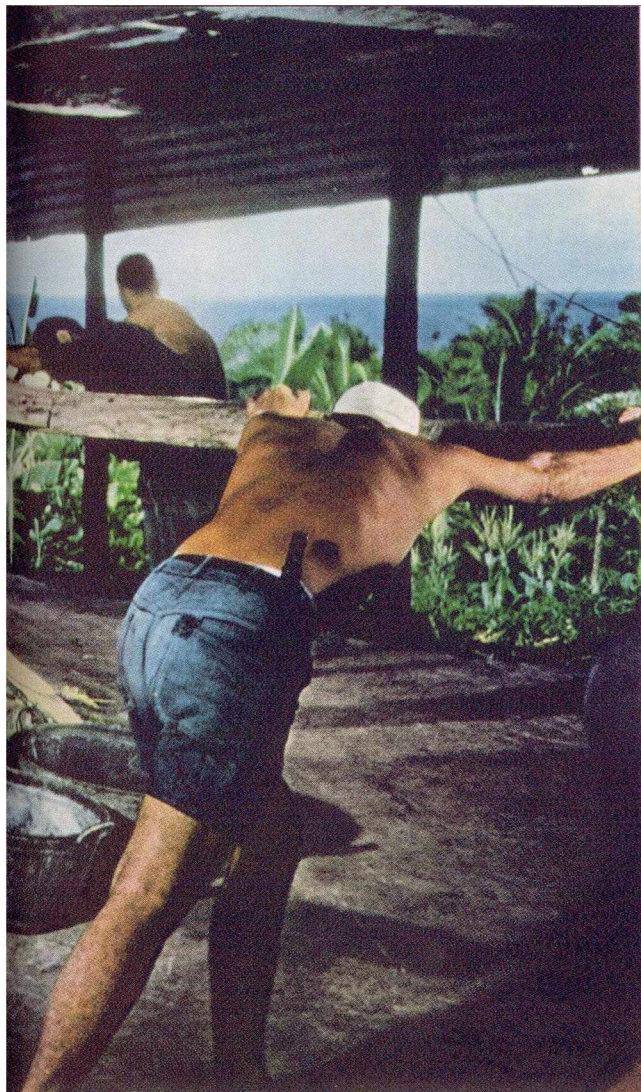
I had always thought of Pitcairn Island as remote, and so it is; yet I was surprised to find how often ships visit the place. Last year, for example, there were more than 60 calls. In practice, one can count on seeing a ship about every 10 days.

Usually they stay about an hour, though some stop longer. Of one who generally stops only half an hour, Flora would say:









## Like Sailors Toiling Round a Capstan, Islanders Turn a Sugar Press

Pitcairn people work hard for a living. Men, women, and even children are busy from daylight to dark cultivating gardens, carving wood, weaving baskets, and catching fish.

Eight men, two to each bar, trudge around this heavy cast-iron press, which was manufactured years ago in the United States. Seamen all, they wear sheath knives fastened to the belt, usually in back where they do not interfere with nautical activities.

Chester Young sits on the hub and plays a chantey on a harmonica. Thelma Brown feeds cane stalks into the iron rollers. Pressed juice pours into the tub.

Opposite, below: Men take advantage of a calm day to go fishing. Putting to sea in home-built canoes, they fish with hook and line for reef fish and deep-water species.

The feel of a nibble at the hook does not excite the Pitcairn fisherman. Instead, he watches the cruising fish through a waterglass and strikes only when he sees it mouthing the bait.

Scanning the bottom through such a glass 24 years ago, Parkin Christian spotted a *Bounty* rudder pintle that lay partly uncovered after a storm had disturbed the sand.

↓ Pitcairn women weave strips of pandanus leaf for baskets and hats to sell to tourists on passing ships. They sun-dry the palmlike leaves, dye them in vats, and rip them into narrow ribbons. Souvenir baskets usually bear the word "Pitcairn" worked into the design.

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"O-a, he a hurry-up captain."

If there is anywhere in the world where the romance of the sea should still cling to ships, it is Pitcairn. Yet even at this place fast and reliable motor vessels have reduced the comings and goings of deepwater vessels to the soullessness of a bus schedule.

On occasion captains have announced to Parkin as he climbed to the bridge:

"Sorry, we can stop only half an hour this time; if we stay longer we shall miss the tide going up the Thames."

The Thames estuary is 8,300 sea miles away from Pitcairn Island.

Pitcairn lies about halfway between Auckland and Panama, which are 6,500 miles apart, but it is almost 400 miles north of the shortest route between the two. Thus islanders live in apprehension of a change of route that would deprive them of their chief contact with the outside world and their principal source of private revenue.

Islanders are hard hit when too many ships call on Saturday, the Adventist Sabbath, because their religious principles will not permit them to trade then. In 1956, 14 ships came on Saturdays. The people still go out to the ship and give some fruit away, but they will not buy or sell on that day.

#### Island Timetable Geared to Ships

Everything on the island is geared to the coming and going of ships. There is always keen rivalry among the men to be the first to sight an incoming vessel. Usually Tom has talked to the ship by wireless, and he knows about when she is due.

The people begin to take their basketloads of souvenirs and fruit down to the landing several hours before the expected arrival (page 779). They carry baskets and bunches of bananas suspended from a shoulder pole, called a *to'o*. Most of the names of utensils are still pure Tahitian, probably because they are things the women used.

Almost anywhere you go on Pitcairn you will see men carving wood and women weaving baskets (pages 769 and 777). When the men are not at sea or working in the fields, they are usually whittling a piece of wine-red miro wood to make a flying fish, a turtle, or a sea bird. Tourists on the ships take all the island can produce.

I sat one day with the men up under the flagpole at The Edge, looking out to sea for the ship (page 736). Suddenly a man sprang

to his feet and sang out, "Sail ho-o-o!"

I saw nothing, but, like the rest, I took his word for it and started down the hill. One youth raced to the bell to give the signal: five strokes repeated three times.

Children are not permitted to go aboard ship, and one man called out to some youngsters who had started down the trail:

"Bout yawly orkal sullen gwen?" (Where are you little children going?)

"We gwen narwy." (We're going swimming.)

More people arrived at a half trot. Someone called:

"John, where's you-a?"

Receiving no answer, he asked another man, "You ka bout he-sa gone?" (Do you know where he's gone?)

"I kawa. I no bin see-um." (I don't know. I haven't seen him.)

Pitcairners have been called the finest surf boatmen in the world. These descendants of seamen live from early youth on and by the sea. All boys from the age of 14 go into the boats to train; at 15 the boy becomes a crew member and pulls an oar.

Three boats, *Ho Ho*, *Nuni*, and *Surprise*, were in use when I was on Pitcairn, while a fourth, the *Barge*, was resting. A boat rests for four months, then goes back into service for a year.

My notebook records a trip out to the *Mataroa* of the Shaw Savill Line, on a day when great green-and-white combers were crashing on the black volcanic rocks of Bounty Bay.

"By the time she arrives, the sea has moderated a bit, but as the three boats put out to sea, each in turn is lifted high on the rollers, hesitates with bow hanging in air, then slides down the translucent green hill of water, oar blades flashing (page 750). Be-

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#### Pitcairn Post Office Is Known to Stamp Collectors All Over the World

This small office bulks large in Pitcairn affairs, for all government revenue comes from the sale of stamps.

Law requires every visiting vessel to take on mail, but deliveries are made only by ships flying the Royal Mail flag.

"Pitcairn Islands" include three uninhabited isles, Oeno, Ducie, and Henderson, which are grouped politically with Pitcairn. The postal cachet's use of the plural confuses some amateur philatelists.

Here postmaster Roy Clark, a native American, lifts bags of registered and ordinary mail.







yond the combers, we set our sails and proceeded to steamer rendezvous three miles out.

"Boat piled high with baskets of fruit and souvenirs. Clement says, 'I doan' like to take fruit out to ships like this. Rather cahly it inside.' I have seen him eat five pineapples without stopping. And half a watermelon. Good man.

"I am riding in Len's boat, *Surprise*. Roy chaffing Len about several days' growth of beard, said ship's people would think islanders a run-down lot if he went out like that, said he looked like a heathen. Len shot back: 'Well, den, you-a call yus Maker a heathen? He never shave.'"

When the boats come alongside a ship, two are usually made fast astern and one forward. One man stays in each boat on watch; these positions are changed every 10 minutes so that everyone has a chance to go on deck.

After selling their curios, the islanders rush to buy at the ship's shop. The fastest trade is in sweets. The islanders buy "lollies" by the box. Canvas yachting shoes, tinned milk, soap, and even watches move briskly.

It is a Pitcairn tradition to sing from the boats before casting off. One captain told me that if trading has been unusually good the passengers hear a lusty rendering of the hymn "God Be with You Till We Meet Again."

#### Duddy and Mummy Guard Bounty Bay

On our homeward run, the helmsman pointed our boat too close up into the wind. The captain shouted:

"Let'er off! Let'er off! You want her sail like Flattie?" Flattie is the outermost of three rocks that stand at the entrance to Bounty Bay. The first two rocks are called Duddy and Mummy, after Thursday October Christian 2d and his wife.

We landed and hauled the boats out as the sky took on a strange mulberry color that contrasted sharply with a robin's-egg-blue sea. The two colors were divided clearly, as if the

horizon were drawn with a straight edge. As we topped the ridge, the glow suddenly went out and the sky turned to lead.

On Pitcairn many things—buildings, tools, foodstuffs—are owned in common. When a ship comes in, a certain amount of fruit is contributed to a common fund by every householder. As community property, the fruit is traded en bloc to the ship's steward for staples such as wheat flour, potatoes, onions, or sugar. The articles so obtained are divided on the courthouse square into 48 equal heaps, one for each household.

One of my chief objectives in coming to



#### The Sun Back-lights Gudgeon Sea Cave as in a Doré Woodcut of Dante's Inferno

Entry is possible only at low tide in a calm sea. Boatmen must lower their heads as they pass the entrance. Long swells send seas thundering into the grotto and fill it with mist.

When the tide creeps higher, all but blocking the entrance, each surging sea, like a stroking piston, compresses the air inside. Visitors then feel a stunning blow on the eardrums.



Pitcairn had been to find, if possible, the resting place of the *Bounty*. I questioned the islanders about any visible remains. Everybody knew that a clutch of iron ballast bars lay in the surf, almost on shore, but no one could tell me anything of the actual ship.

"It-sa gone," they all said. "Nothing left."

Everyone knew, of course, that she had gone down in Bounty Bay. The question was, exactly where?

I soon found in going over the area with a waterglass, and later in diving to the bottom, that no "wreck," as such, remained. The burning, the fishing up of timbers more than

a century ago, and, above all, the relentless pounding of the Pacific combers had demolished the *Bounty*. The most one could hope to find would be metal fittings.

One night at Fred's house Parkin told me how he found the *Bounty's* rudder.

It was 1933. Parkin Christian and Robert Young had been fishing, and they were paddling their canoe toward shore. At the entrance to Bounty Bay, in 40 feet of water over a sand bank at the foot of weed-covered rock, they stopped. Parkin got his waterglass over the side and scanned the bottom.

"These nanway [a kind of fish]," said







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↑ **Steady Hand Holds *Yankee's* Wheel**

Clifford Warren takes the helm as the brigantine clears the Pitcairn cliffs for Henderson Island.

↓ **Longboat Rides Athwart Steel Bulwarks**

For 23 years Captain Johnson has taken Pitcairn men and their boat 120 miles to Henderson to cut wood.





Parkin, "they lived there, and I try to look for fish. The gudgeon is laying on top of the sand right out, and I start to sing out:

"'There's the *Bounty's* gudgeon!'

"Then I catch myself, I say, 'Oh, what a fool; I know I can get it for myself.'

"We come ashore. I pull my canoe up and start for home. I come get a line and sinkers and off I go again. I don't want even my wife to know where I'm going'.

"I get it up first time; it come only so high, then it slip off. It stand right up on bottom; so I let the noose down and it go right down as though I put a hat on my head, and up he come.

"A chap don't see what I take out of my boat. He ask me did I catch any fish; I say I get one."

The gudgeon (it actually turned out to be a rudder strap and pintle) had at first slipped from Parkin's noose; it struck the bottom and uncovered some planks and timbers. It was the *Bounty's* rudder. Parkin returned the next day to fish up the rudder, but it was heavy and he needed help; so he could no longer keep his find a secret.

### *Bounty's* Voyage Begins with Breadfruit

The *Bounty* started life as the merchant ship *Bethia*.

In 1787 one of the secretaries of state had addressed a letter to the Lords Commissioners of the Admiralty:

"The Merchants and Planters interested in His Majesty's West India Possessions have represented that the Introduction of the Bread Fruit Tree into the Islands in those Seas to constitute an Article of Food would be very essential Benefit to the Inhabitants, and have humbly solicited that Measures may be taken for procuring some Trees of that Description ... to be transplanted in the said Islands. ...

"I am in Consequence to signify to your Lordships His Majesty's Command that you do cause a Vessel of proper Class to be stored and Victualled for this Service. ..."

The planters thought that the breadfruit, which Dampier, Cook, and others had described as a cheap and nutritious substitute for bread, would make good food for slaves.

The *Bethia* was renamed in recognition of George III's bounty to the West India merchants. She was of 220 tons burden and she had an over-all length of about 100 feet.

The *Bethia* had been sheathed in wood, but for better protection against the shipworm

(*Teredo navalis*), the Admiralty ordered that the vessel be sheathed in copper.\*

Copper sheathing had been tried for the first time in 1761, with only partial success, because designers of that day were ignorant of the phenomenon of electrolysis. When ferrous and nonferrous metals are immersed in salt water, a galvanic electric current is set up which rapidly corrodes away the iron.

To prevent such corrosion, the *Bounty's* gudgeons, pintles, and other exposed underwater fittings were also made of copper and bronze, and so have lasted intact to this day.

### Ship Stripped Before Burning

We may picture the mutineers on January 23, 1790—Christian well aware that all signs of habitation on Pitcairn must be destroyed, the others torn between the fear of discovery and the knowledge that by destroying the ship they would forever cut themselves off from the world they knew.

All agreed at last, and everything useful in the *Bounty* was taken ashore: top hamper, timber, all the metal that could be drawn, sails, compasses, chronometer, glass from the great cabin windows, sheet lead for musket balls, forge, muskets, cutlasses, hand tools, pitch, earthenware, guns.

In my mind's eye, I see the *Bounty* anchored in eight fathoms well outside the semicircle of Bounty Bay. One calm day cable was paid out, and she was worked into the bay and run aground. Following seas must have slammed her rudder from side to side with shuddering crashes until it snapped off, and, with a final lift under her stern, the sea-worn little vessel struck hard upon the shore.

Then they set fire to her. Once she was alight, she must have made a stout blaze, with her sun-dried timbers and pitched seams.

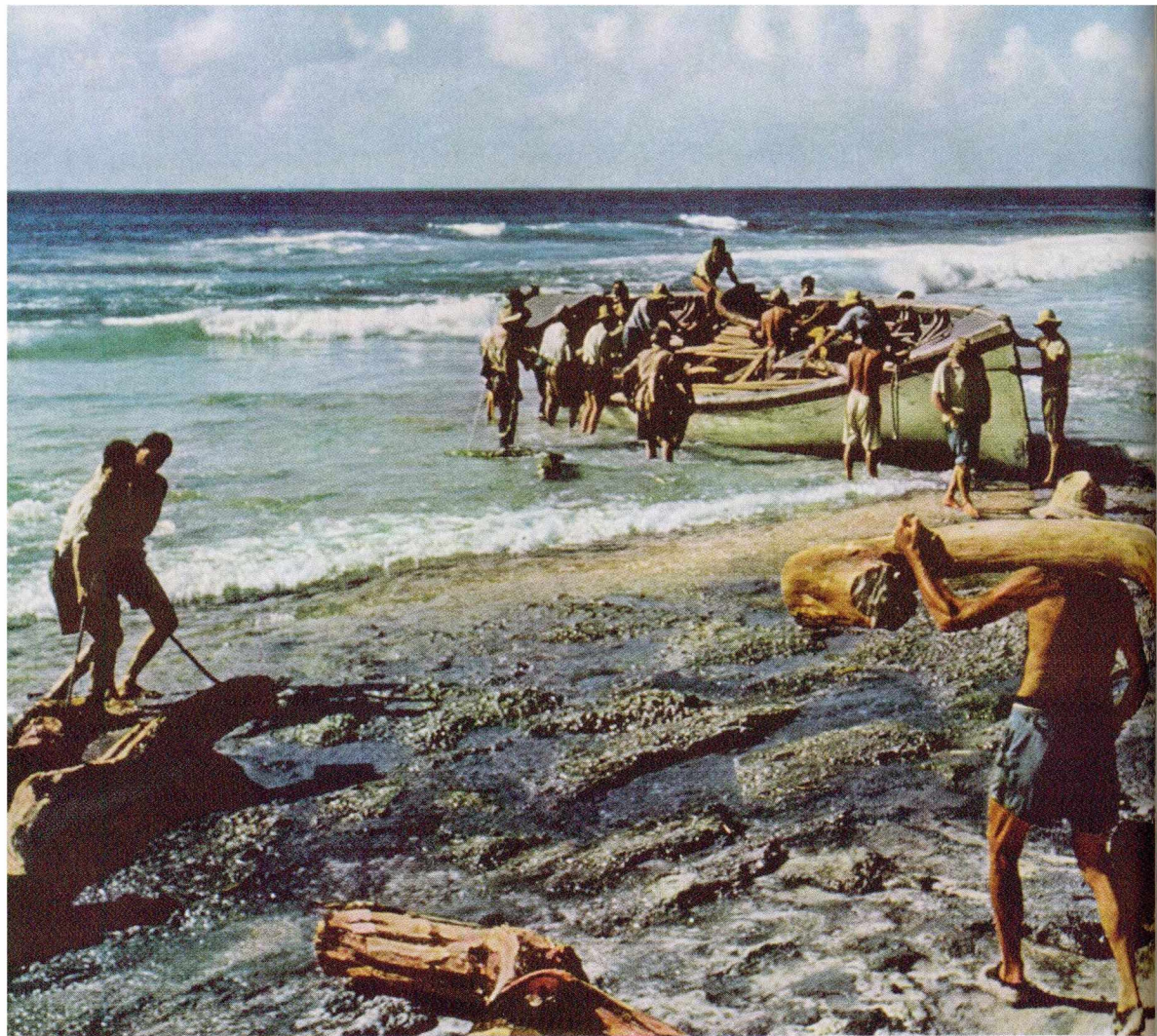
I can see her blazing away, and hear the crackling of the flames. The little band huddles silently on shore, watching the flames eat away their last hope of seeing England again.

Lady Diana Belcher, in her book on the mutiny, speaks of the arrival at Pitcairn in 1841 of "H. M. S. *Curaçoa*" (*Curaçao*?) under Capt. Jenkin Jones. She writes:

"Captain Jones, having ascertained the spot where the *Bounty* had been sunk, succeeded, with some difficulty, in raising the charred hull, and found that such had been the solidity

\* See "Shipworms, Saboteurs of the Sea," by F. G. Walton Smith, NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE, October, 1956.





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### Fred Christian Carves → Wooden Flying Fish

All Pitcairn males are expert carvers, selling their miro-wood creations to passing voyagers. Each man stamps his name on his products.

A favorite design is the fanciful flying fish, with incised scales, inlaid eyes, and orangewood teeth. Other subjects are vases held in a carved hand, turtles, sea birds, walking sticks, and boxes with puzzle locks.

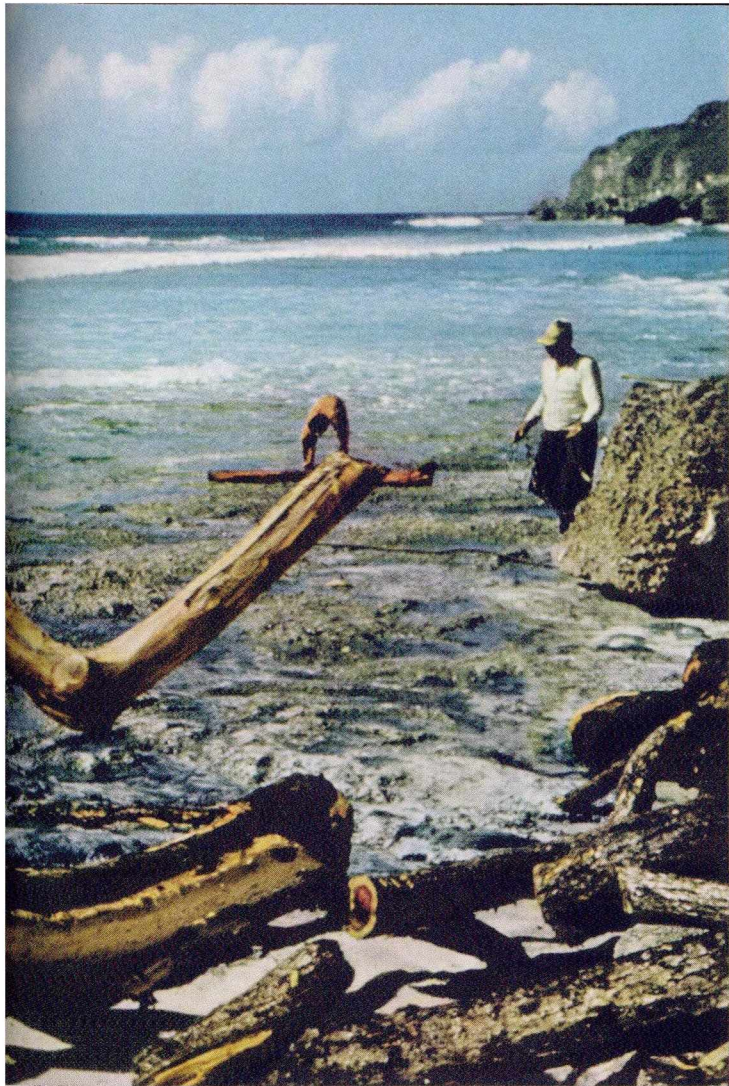
Carvers maintain small sheds for workshops. Some have primitive lathes worked by foot.

Fred receives mail orders from all parts of the world. Sometimes a ship's officer requests a special piece for delivery on the return voyage. In such instances Fred stamps the owner's name, as well as his own, into the wood.

◀ Miro heartwood shows variegated grain. Pithy outer layer is discarded.







## Loggers on Henderson Drag and Carry Miro Timbers to the Waiting Longboat

Once Pitcairn was covered with trees, but ruthless cutting deforested the island in a few generations.

Six times the size of Pitcairn, uninhabited Henderson is densely forested.

*Yankee* remained 24 hours, and islanders slept ashore in order to cut as much wood as possible. Each ax-man blazed his mark into the wood he felled and on return to Pitcairn claimed his own pieces.

In 1957 *Yankee* made her last cruise under Captain Johnson. If her new owner does not call at Pitcairn, islanders will have to sail their open boats to Henderson, a hazardous undertaking.

Henderson Island has a curious connection with literary history. In 1820 the Nantucket whaler *Essex* was rammed and sunk in mid-Pacific by a sperm whale. Two of her life-boats landed on Henderson. Finding little water and no food, the shipwrecked mariners put to sea again and finally were picked up near the South American coast after a three-month voyage. Incredible hardships reduced them to cannibalism. From the *Essex* story, Herman Melville drew inspiration for *Moby Dick*.

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of her timbers, that her 'heart of oak' had survived the power of fire and water, and the effects of submersion for half a century."

It seems difficult to believe that a vessel not equipped with special salvage and lifting devices could have raised the "charred hull" of the *Bounty*. No doubt Captain Jones did bring to the surface some sizable timbers of the old ship. In any case, so far as I can ascertain, nothing more was seen of her until Parkin Christian grappled the rudder to the surface in 1933.

Len said to me one day: "I can show you one copper bar. My father first see it 'bout 15 years ago. I dive down to it and touch it, but it's stuck to the bottom."

This was the first word I had had of anything definite that might mark the site; so on the first calm day we got Len's canoe and paddled out to the place where Len had seen the copper bar.

Fifty yards offshore Len stopped paddling and turned to take bearings. He sighted over one shoulder at the soaring rock spire of Ship Landing Point, then looked up at The Edge. "She right here," he said.

#### Sea Floor Yields Bronze Rudder Pintle

I lifted the waterglass over the side and pressed its glass bottom into the heaving sea.

"See it?" Len asked.

I shook my head. Len peered over my shoulder and pointed. Deep in a fissure I saw a short, gray-green bar, too straight to be a natural growth. Little yellow wrasses flickered unconcernedly over it, indifferent to the encrusted fragment of history.

I shrugged into the harness of my Aqua-Lung, put on rubber flippers and face mask, and fell backward, diver-fashion, into the sea.

Turning over, I flutter-kicked my way down into the miniature valley, past flowerlike small corals, until my hand closed on the bar. It was cemented firmly to the bottom.

Directly above, Len's face peered through the disk of the waterglass. I made a hammering motion. The face disappeared, and a hammer and cold chisel were slowly lowered to me on a cord.

I stood on my head in the cleft in which the bar lay. Down there my head and shoulders were in comparative calm, but every few seconds the surge would slam into me and my wildly kicking feet were then powerless to hold me vertical. Helplessly I would crash against the coral fingers that clung to the

rock and feel the stings that meant the sharp fingers were scoring crimson lines on my legs.

For a quarter of an hour I chipped away around the sides of the two-inch-thick bar. When I had cut a trench in the limestone bottom all the way around it, I inserted a steel rod, heaved, and the bar came away.

In the boat we turned the bar over and over. It tapered slightly to a rounded and eroded point and the upper end was irregular; it was evidently a pintle that had broken off from the rudder strap which held it. I think this is the second of four pintles shown on the Admiralty plan (page 758).

Parkin had pointed out from The Edge the spot where he recovered the rudder; that was only a dozen yards from the rocky embrasure that held the pintle we recovered, but though Len, Tom, and I searched the area minutely in the calm days that followed, we found no other trace of the *Bounty*. Obviously, the main body of the vessel lay elsewhere.

#### Where Did the *Bounty* Go Down?

"I think," I said to Len, "that as the ship drove ashore, the following seas broke off her rudder. The pintles dropped in the sand, and the *Bounty* drove aground some distance beyond. What do you think?"

"Sound reasonable," said Len.

"Well, then," I said, "where did the ship itself go down?"

We talked it over. The thing is relatively simple, we thought: The *Bounty* was about 100 feet long; the ballast bars are over there in the surf; the rudder and pintles were found out there; all we have to do is draw an imaginary line between the two places, cruise along this line on the bottom, and we are bound to find some trace of the ship.

Cruise we did; every day of reasonable calm we filled the air cylinders and dived. We nearly plowed furrows with our chins in the bottom. But we found nothing.

Then, late one afternoon nearly six weeks after my arrival on Pitcairn, I took Chester Young out to show him how diving was done. By this time we were losing hope, but we paddled out to near where we had found the pintle.

Len helped me on with my Aqua-Lung, and I dived first. While waiting for Len, I took my bearings on the big rock under which the pintle had lain and cruised slowly over the animate carpet of undulating seaweed, scrutinizing the cove bottom closely. Big jacks swam round me, watching curiously. On a





### Three Longboats Take On Goods for Trade with a Passing Ship

Passengers bound to or from New Zealand eagerly buy curios and fresh coconuts, pineapples, oranges, lemons, grapefruit, bananas, and avocados. Pitcairn's fertile volcanic soil gives an exquisite flavor to all fruits.



bed of weed I saw a crescent-shaped object.

Thrusting my face closer, I saw it was an oarlock. Unlike the standard U-shaped oarlock, this one had one arm markedly longer than the other, forming a tilted crescent that looked strikingly like a new moon or the symbol of Islam (page 757).

As I watched, 14 Moorish Idols, bizarrely shaped black-and-yellow reef fish, swam in echelon over the crescent—Moorish fish maneuvering over a Moorish crescent. Fantastic coincidence that only the sea can produce!

Then I came unexpectedly on a long, sandy trench. The end nearest me was covered with white limestone secreted by calcareous algae—lithothamnion, a stonemaking plant—and I could see little squiggles in the surface, a curious marking that resembled nothing so much as petrified worms.

I thrust my face closer, almost touching the bottom. My heart gave a jump. The squiggles were encrusted sheathing nails, *Bounty* nails—dozens of them. I looked up for Len. He was just above me, staring questioningly. I reached up my hand for his, pumped it violently, and pointed. He looked up grinning and nodding, and we shook hands again.

We had found the resting place of the *Bounty*.

#### *Bounty* Nails Give Off "Smoke"

Beyond, two other trenches stretched toward the spot where the ballast bars lay in the yeasty surf. I had been searching too far to the eastward. Apparently, prevailing winds and currents had veered the ship as she went ashore. The bow had pivoted on the shore, and the stern had swung round to the west.

I began to chip away at the layer of nails. At each blow of the hammer a puff of black "smoke" arose—carbonized wood of the *Bounty*, still clinging to metal fastenings. It was extremely difficult to hold a position on the bottom. Ever and again, the sea would bowl us over completely or carry us shoreward sprawling on our backs.

Near the nails I came on a long bolt, partly uncovered. I carefully chipped down both sides until it came free. Swinging up to the bobbing canoe, I thrust the bolt over the side.

Len and I saw enough to convince us that we had found the line of the keel, or at least one of the main strakes of the hull, though we saw no planks or ribs. Everything was covered by a hard, limy growth.

As we dug deeper, we came upon fragments

of the copper with which the *Bounty* had been sheathed, in good condition and almost an eighth of an inch thick. Deeper digging should bring up larger pieces of the ship.

#### Broad Arrow Identifies Oarlock

That night I polished and buffed a bronze sheathing nail until it shone like gold. A piece of the original *Bounty*! The burnished gold surface caught the light with a mesmerizing effect. As I stared and dreamed, I seemed to see the shipyard at Deptford, with the *Bounty* on the stocks and the shipwrights swarming over her. I heard the ringing hammer blows, the "chink, chink" of the caulking irons, and the "chid, chid, chid" of the adzes paring away the solid English oak. I smelled the winy odor of new timbers oozing sap in the hot sun, the resinous smell of pitch, and the clean astringent scent of Stockholm tar in the rigging.

A leather-aproned workman, perched in the scaffolding, drives another nail into the copper sheathing, and says to his mate:

"Off to Otaheite and the Great South Sea! Damn my eyes, Sam'l, I've 'alf a mind to ship myself."

As I worked, the noisy electric light plants were turned off and a hush fell over Adamstown, for it was the eve of the Sabbath.

By the soft yellow light of kerosene lamps, Fred's family gathered for prayers. Fred's shock of curly gray hair shone like a halo in the lamplight. The light and shadow lay on the bowed heads of the little group with the bold chiaroscuro of a Rembrandt.

After prayers I watched Flora scrutinize the bronze oarlock in the beam of an electric torch.

"I look for the broad arrow," she said, referring to the symbol struck into all large fittings of the Royal Navy in the 18th century, "but I doan' find it." She handed the heavy metal crescent to me. I snapped on my flashlight, and the three strokes of the broad arrow leaped out at me (page 756).

"That's it, all right," said Fred. "She's

(Continued on page 789)

#### Climbing a Jacob's Ladder Is Not so Easy as It Looks

Longboats tie up to the ship fore and aft. One man remains in each boat as ship tender, while his companions swarm up the swaying ladder. Pitcairners sell their goods for money or trade for food.

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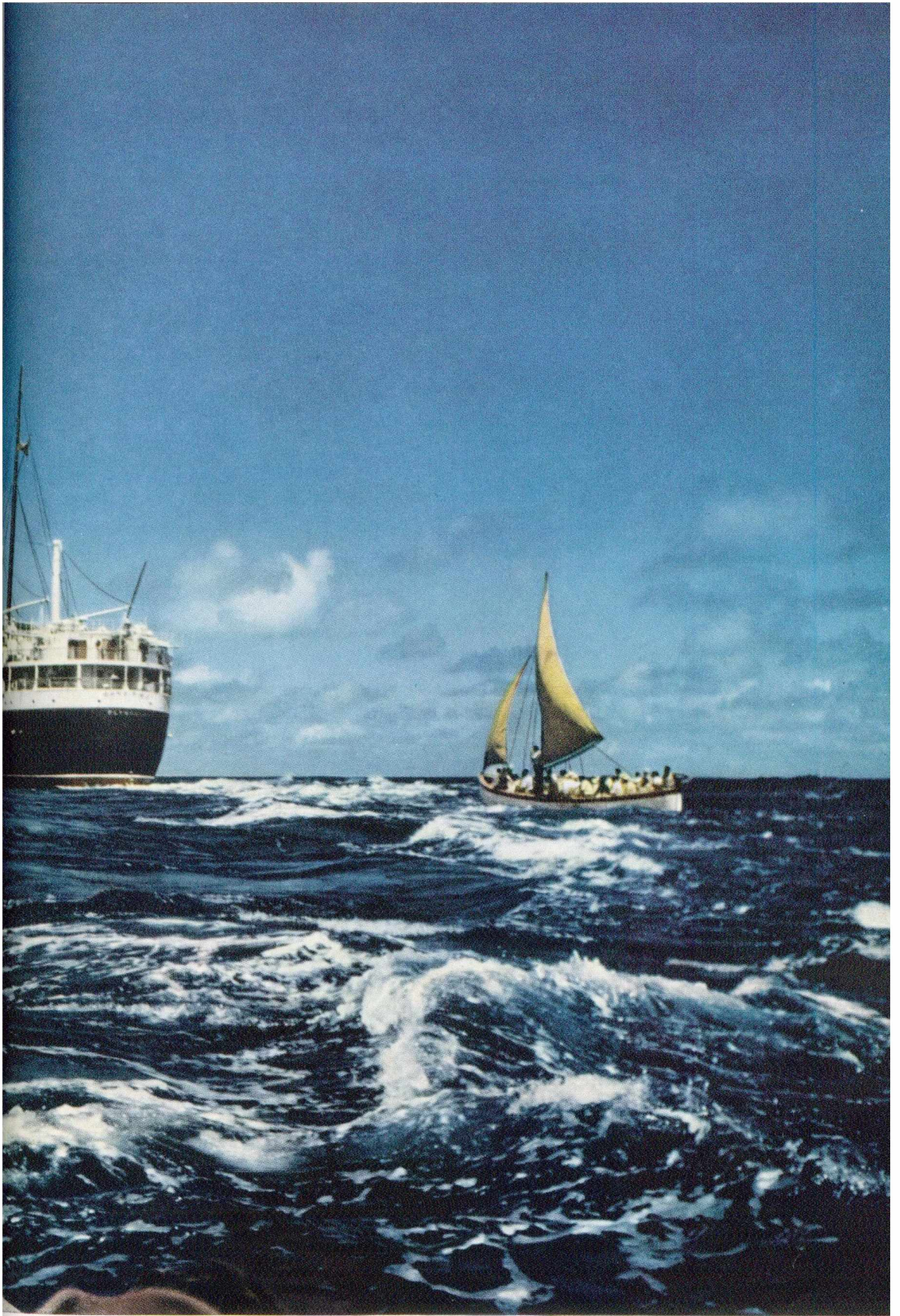


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*Rangitiki*, in a Swirl of Foam, Turns Her Back on Pitcairn Island









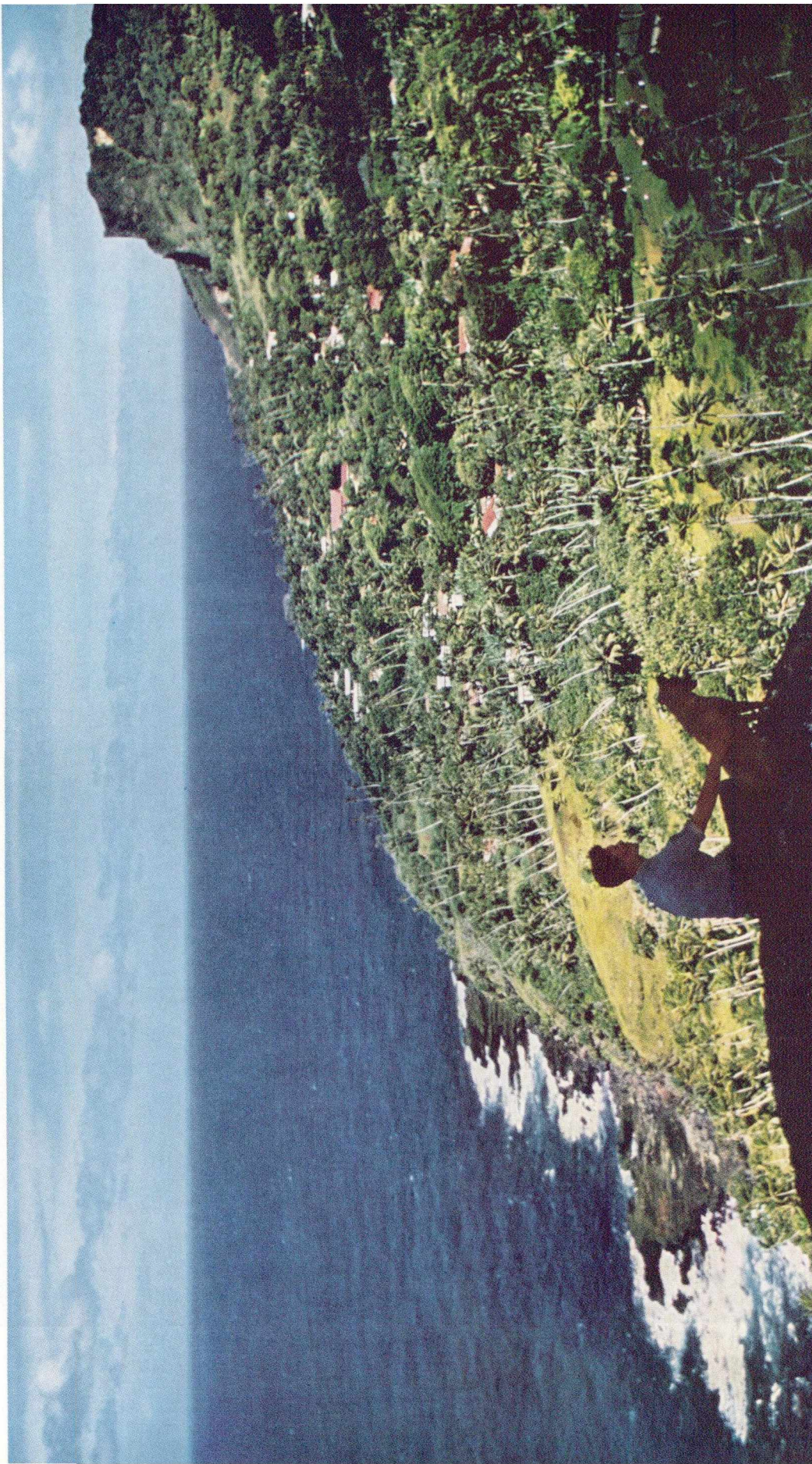


Seen from Christian's Cave, Adamstown's Red Roofs Dot Pitcairn's Green Plateau

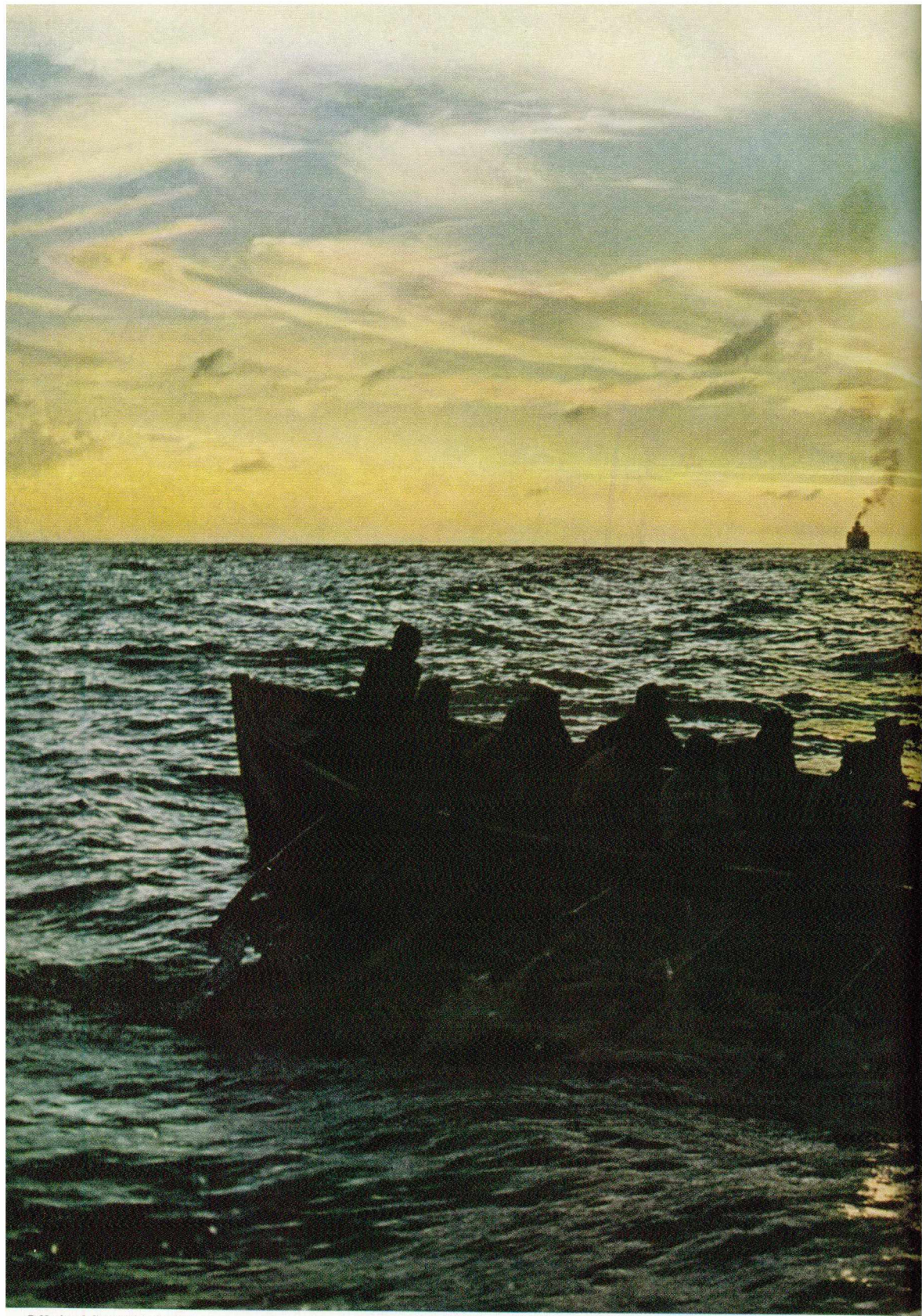
Houses stand at random on both sides of the main path, which runs parallel to the sea. Made of wood and resting on stone piers, they cling to the island's shoulder about 300 feet above the shore. Coconut palms rise above pandanus, candlenut, and rose apple.

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### A Ship Sails over the Horizon Against Sunset's Fading Glow

Some captains steam out to sea as soon as the longboats have made fast. On casting off, the boats face a three- to five-mile sail back home. Other skippers heave to so close that boatmen hoist no sail but row out.



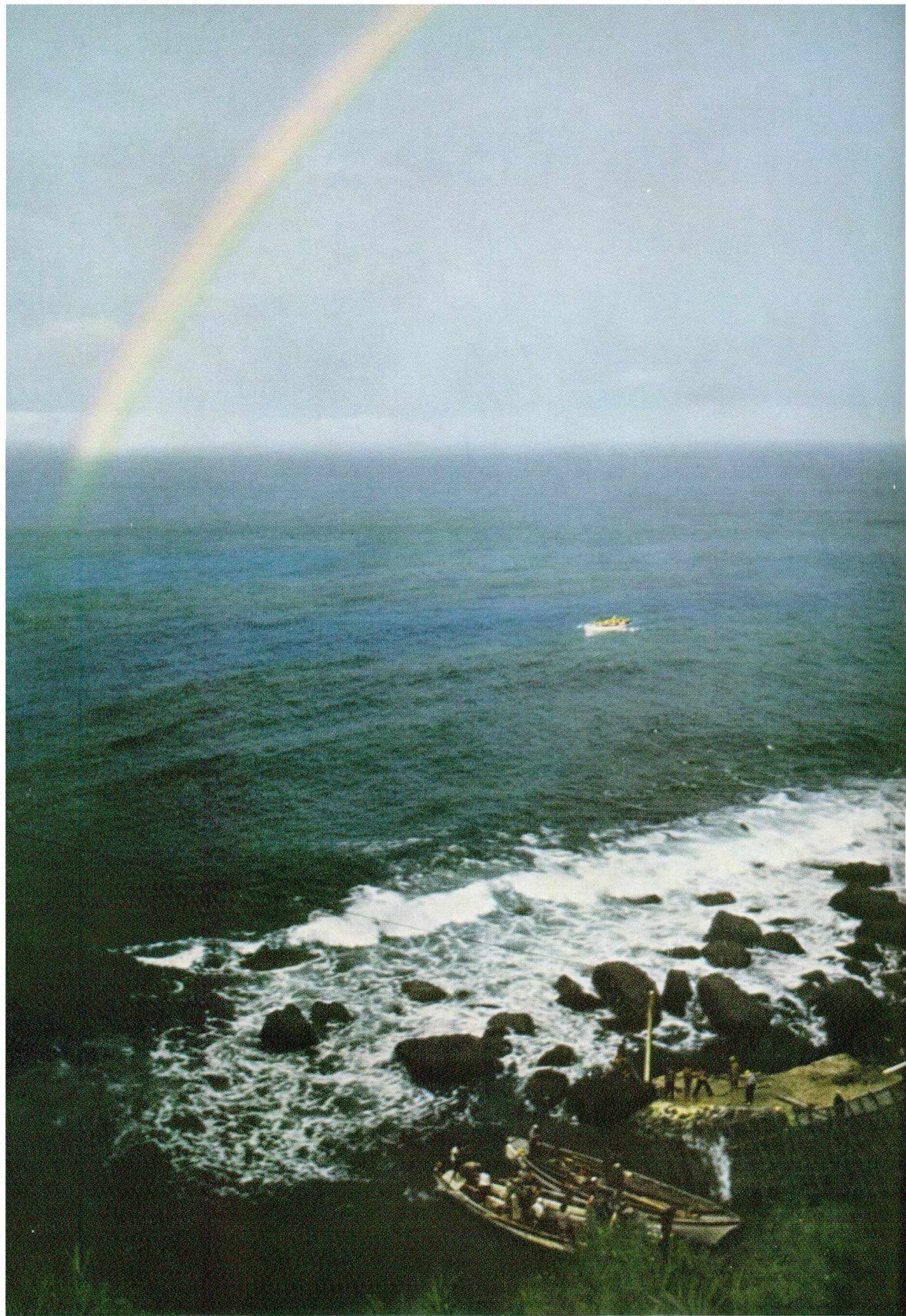


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**With the Short Stroke of Experienced Seamen, Islanders Row Home at Dusk**

When a visiting ship brings scantlings and planking, her crew ties the wood in bundles and throws it overboard for the longboats to retrieve. Sharp-eyed oarsmen rarely miss a bundle bobbing in the waves.







from the *Bone-ty*." I thought back. This could only have come from the *Bounty's* cutter, for the launch had been cast adrift with Bligh and his loyal men in it.

By great good fortune, one of the *Bounty's* anchors was later found by a diver from the globe-girdling yacht *Yankee* during her last visit to Pitcairn (pages 762-5).\*

During my stay on Pitcairn, I asked Parkin why he thought his ancestor had mutinied. He replied: "Because he was an honest man and Bligh call him a thief; say he steal some coc'nuts."

This is the standard story, but it is difficult to determine in the case of the mutiny in the *Bounty* which of the two chief actors—Bligh or Christian—has been treated unjustly by history. Volumes, literally, have been published on both sides of the story.

### Bligh Greeted as Returning Hero

What then, was the real cause of the mutiny? As usually happens in real life as opposed to fiction, neither side of the question is all black or all white.

When Bligh returned safely to England after his epic open-boat voyage, he was greeted as a hero and martyr. But after the court-martial of the captured mutineers, the climate of public opinion changed, and ever since Bligh has been pictured as an unendurable martinet and even a monster.

Hear Bligh himself:

"It will very naturally be asked, what could be the reason for such a revolt... I can only conjecture that the mutineers had assured themselves of a more happy life among the Otaheiteans, than they could possibly have in England; which, joined to some female connections, have most probably been the principal cause of the whole transaction.

"The women at Otaheite are handsome, mild, and cheerful... The chiefs were so much attached to our people, that they... made them promises of large possessions. Thus the mutineers imagined it in their power to fix themselves in the midst of plenty, on the finest island in the world, where they need not labor, and where the allurements of dissipation are beyond any thing that can be conceived."

Fletcher Christian left no written record,

but he has been quoted by several witnesses. *Bounty* crewman James Morrison recorded in his journal that when Bligh was ordered by Christian into the boat, he "begged of Mr. Christian to desist, saying 'I'll pawn my honour, I'll give my bond, Mr. Christian, never to think of this if you'll desist'; ... to which Mr. Christian replyd 'No, Captain Bligh, if you had any honour, things had not come to this. ... I have been in hell for this fortnight passed and am determined to bear it no longer, and you know Mr. Cole that I have been used like a dog the whole voyage.'"

There is no doubt that Bligh had a caustic tongue and an irascible nature. He drove his men and was impatient with inefficiency. But the records show that he used the cat-o'-nine-tails less than many other commanders of his day, and that he was solicitous of the welfare of his men. In dirty weather off Cape Horn, he kept a fire going below and even gave up his own cabin to the men who had wet berths. Most remarkable, he brought them through the long voyage without a single case of scurvy.

Christian seems to have been oversensitive—today he would be called neurotic—and given to a feeling of persecution. Like Bligh, he had a quick temper.

It seems evident that the unpremeditated mutiny arose from a sudden impulse on the part of Christian, who smarted under Bligh's hazing, but that the opportunity was quickly welcomed by the rest as a chance to return to an island paradise.

### Tahiti Still Lures Men to Linger

I have walked on the black sand beach of Matavai and looked across the green thunder of the surf to the anchorage of Wallis, Cook, Bougainville, and Bligh (page 726). Whatever may have been the song the sirens sang, I am certain in my own mind that it must have been in the Tahitian tongue.

Capt. Irving Johnson, who has sailed the South Sea in *Yankee* for more than 20 years, knows at first hand the difficulty of keeping a crew together at "the finest island in the world." He says:

"I don't see how Cook, Bligh, or any other navigator had any men at all left to work the ship when leaving Tahiti."

The irony of it all is that when the breadfruit reached the West Indies at last—at the cost of mutiny, piracy, shipwreck, murder, and exile—the Negro slaves there found it tasteless and would not eat it.

\* See, in the NATIONAL GEOGRAPHIC MAGAZINE: "The *Yankee's* Wander-World," January, 1949; and "Westward Bound in the *Yankee*," January, 1942, both by Irving and Electa Johnson.



